

EXCLUSIVE: THE IRAN OFFER THAT BUSH TURNED DOWN

THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

JUNE 2006

The *Other* Cheney
in Washington

Mitt Romney,
Mr. Overhyped

WHO'S MACHO NOW?

The end of the GOP
masculinity monopoly

FRANCIS WILKINSON

SUMMER BOOKS ISSUE

Michael Tomasky on Peter Beinart

Robert Kuttner on John C. Bogle

Stephen Holmes on *Cobra II*



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*"There is no wholly masculine man,
no purely feminine woman."*

— MARGARET FULLER

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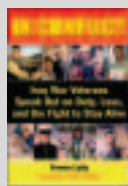
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The Real Tax Test

IRAQ IN CONTINUING MELTDOWN. OIL PRICES AT record highs. Forty-five million uninsured. A still-large budget deficit and an ever-increasing debt. How to respond? Hey, let's cut taxes! That was the congressional rejoinder to our nation's several crises in early May, when

lawmakers passed a five-year, \$70 billion tax cut, which news accounts affirmed that the President was eager to sign. The story is an old one, but the details still have not lost their ability to shock: Middle-income households will receive an average of \$20 back, *The Washington Post* reported, while the .02 percent of American households above \$1 million will reap an average windfall of \$42,000. One almost has to admire the Tammany-esque frankness of these numbers. In 2000, candidate Bush at least felt the need to pretend that his tax cuts were aimed at the middle class. But now, with the clock ticking on his (and maybe congressional Republicans') lame-duckery, they don't even bother disguising the class warfare.

With a small number of exceptions—15 in the House and three in the Senate—the Democrats all voted against it. But voting against an obviously bad bill isn't the real tax test; after all, most House Democrats are in very safe seats, and the issue wasn't particularly risky even for the 41 Democratic senators who voted no. The real question is whether Democrats can say forthrightly, in an election season—for they will surely be asked repeatedly—that they would repeal or roll back the Bush administration tax cuts in order to fund other national priorities.

So far, the evidence on this question isn't very encouraging. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi appeared on *Meet*

the Press recently to plug the Democratic agenda. She was discussing the Democratic proposal for energy independence when Tim Russert suggested to her that any such comprehensive plan would require large government subsidies to encourage industries to change; would you, Russert asked, "roll back the Bush tax cut to pay for it?"

Russert tried four times to get Pelosi to say yes—and note that he said "roll back," not repeal, which gave her wiggle room. And, four times, Pelosi—who voted against the tax cut—hemmed and hawed.

ALL RIGHT, SHE CAN perhaps be forgiven for not wanting to play Russert's game of gotcha! But Democrats can't avoid this question forever. And they shouldn't. But they do, and there's one main historical reason why.

If it's true that those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it, it's also the case that those who are *too* mindful of history tend to wallow in it. So it is with Democrats and taxes; Walter Mondale tried that, they say, referring to Mondale's ill-advised proclamation in 1984 that he'd raise taxes, and look what happened to him.

But there are two reasons why 1984 is very much worth forgetting. First, the

circumstances are dramatically different: Today, unlike the 1980s, Americans have firsthand experience of a period of conservative failure. That experience, of watching as fake solutions are applied to large problems (when the problems are acknowledged at all), is new for most Americans, and it gives liberals and Democrats an opening to make a bolder alternative case than most of them have been willing to make for some time.

Second, no one is saying that Democrats should do what Mondale did. Instead, Democrats should emphasize both fairness (making those who got the bulk of the cuts pay their freight) and the pressing needs that face us. Democrats should say simply to people: "If what you want is more tax cuts, vote Republican. But look around you. We have needs as a people. All of us agree, for example, that we need to wean ourselves off foreign oil. We can do that as Americans. But we can't do it through tax cuts. You and your neighbors can't get together, pool your tax cuts, and create a fund to encourage businesses to invest more in biofuels. Only the federal government can do that. So you need

to decide: If you want to kick the problem of energy independence down the road to your children, then vote Republican. If you want to be serious about trying to do something about this problem, and create a solution from which you and your children will benefit, then you better vote for me, because

I'll do something about it, and the Republicans won't."

Obviously, this won't be an easy sell. But a clear majority of Americans now agree with at least the last sentence of my imaginary monologue. That's what's new, and it's a reality that has the potential to change the nature of the tax debate as we have known it. **TAP**

— MICHAEL TOMASKY

*The experience
of conservative
failure could
change the nature
of the debate
over tax cuts.*



*Let us wave the
truly patriotic flag
of the Preamble,
with the “common
good” as our motto.*

— JONATHAN BAYLISS
GLOUCESTER, MA

Labor in Pain

AMERICAN UNIONS ARE sinking slowly toward extinction in no small part because their parochial, self-serving leadership refuses to take even the slightest responsibility for a decline unprecedented in the advanced industrialized world: 50 years of falling membership; nearly 30 years of falling median hourly wages; a fairly wide swath of unions still run by the Mafia.

“It’s all the bosses’ fault—and globalization,” say the “friends of labor,” of whom Harold Meyerson, who reviewed my book in your pages [“The Curse on Unions,” May 2006], is among the most prominent. Such friends are chosen on the basis of how faithfully they echo this dubious claim and attack those like me who contest it.

But Meyerson’s refutation depends heavily on suppressing my arguments and ignoring my evidence. I don’t say that the problem of the labor movement is caused by some Augustinian “original sin.” I explain widespread, continuous, crippling corruption in terms of America’s fiefdom model of unionism: an archaic, clientistic form of organization based on vertical ties between members, lead-

ers and contractors. Members are dependent on leaders for jobs who get them from the employers. It’s a giant protection racket—one that’s historically proved more permeable to mob influence than to mass-based participation of working people.

Meyerson wants to see a more social democratic America in which unions fight for the common good. So do I. Where we differ is the idea that these goals are possible without a structural overhaul of organized labor.

ROBERT FITCH
Author of Solidarity for Sale: How Corruption Destroyed the Labor Movement and Undermined America’s Promise
New York, New York

Harold Meyerson responds: Piffle—not entirely, but preponderantly. First, a number of union leaders—not all, surely, but a sizable number—take the decline of unions quite seriously. Otherwise, it’s hard to explain why the aggregate number of organizers in the movement has increased by several multiples over the past decade. Second, the most serious declines in membership have occurred in unions that don’t have the hiring hall, “clientistic” structure that

Fitch deplores—that is, unions in the manufacturing sector. Which suggests that globalization and employer opposition to unions are actually genuine reasons why unions are in decline. Third, I have not exactly been shy about criticizing the failings of numerous union leaders. Fourth, Fitch offers no quantitative data to bolster his claim that “a fairly wide swath” of unions are mobbed up. “Fairly wide swath” is fairly imprecise language.

Bravo, Tomasky

FROM MICHAEL TOMASKY [“Party in Search of a Nation,” May] we at last have recognition of what we’ve been missing! His article has the makings of a political philosophy for Democrats—exactly the right one, just when we need it most, starting at the precinct level but especially as it may ascend to voices in Washington.

The “common good” is a venerable concept. In our dictionary it is equivalent to “the general Welfare” included in the Preamble to the Constitution (along with Union, Justice, Tranquility, common defense, Liberty, and Posterity).

None of the Founding Fathers was very happy about the Constitution itself. But it was offered as a pragmatically durable compromise, just flexible enough to afford a variety of contingencies or amendments. Those who wrote it were basically united only in a comprehensive idea of their essential *purpose*—their common *motive*—in offering a sovereign people the framework for national self-government.

Let us wave the truly patri-

otic flag of the Preamble, with the common good as our motto. It is the one Big Idea that can unite Democrats while discussing our internal differences—much as the Founding Fathers once did for the country as a whole.

JONATHAN BAYLISS
Gloucester, MA

Wrong, Tomasky

I THINK THERE ARE SOME serious problems with Michael Tomasky’s article.

His recent intellectual history of the Democratic Party is highly misleading. Interest-group liberalism was not something foisted on the Democrats by Students for a Democratic Society, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Cook County delegation to the 1972 Democratic National Convention. It was the philosophy of the New Deal.

The “common good” was seen as essentially the sum of the goods of the different interest groups—farmers, labor, business, etc. The state served as a broker among these groups, and political participation largely amounted to joining one or another of these groups.

This system worked when there were a handful of interest groups, but as the number of such groups proliferated and demanded their piece of the pie, conflict grew and it became impossible to manage. There was no “New Left” conspiracy to convert the “civic republican” New Deal to individualistic interest-group liberalism. Interest-group liberalism was always the New Deal’s approach, and it collapsed of its own weight in the 1970s.

Tomasky is also wrong about who killed off whatever notion of the common good there was in New Deal/Great Society liberalism. It was conservative Republicans. That ought to be obvious enough, and I can't understand why the New Right does not play a far more prominent role in Tomasky's story.

It is undoubtedly true that today's Democrats need to bring back some notion of the common good, or what Adam Smith and Tocqueville called "enlightened self-interest" or "self-interest properly understood." Yet I think a note of caution is in order here as well. Too much communitarianism is as dangerous as too much individualism, and notions of the common good can be used to mask privilege, elitism, and assumed moral

superiority, as Irving Howe has pointed out:

"There is a long tradition in this country to which the rhetoric of 'special interests' is related. It is the tradition of an elite gentry ... which supposes itself to be above 'mere' material needs. This political tradition claims to care only about higher-minded, moral concerns ... Isn't there, however, a discernible general or national interest, transcending the interests of discrete social groups? On some matters (clean air, safety rules at work, national security, and so on) there no doubt is. But [some] have been a bit too enchanted with the notion of a general interest transcending the limited interest of various social groups. [They] tend to speak of special interests as if there were

no crucial moral and social distinctions to be made among them; as if it weren't clearly in the common good to further some and oppose others."

THOMAS M. GERAGHTY
Chapel Hill, NC

For the Record

I'D LIKE TO BRING TO YOUR readers' attention an editing error in my *Prospect* article, "The Once and Future Carbohydrate Economy [April]." My original piece estimated that 25 percent of our transportation fuels could be displaced by plant matter. The published article stated 50 percent to 100 percent.

Biofuels should be an important component of a renewable transportation fuel strategy, but they are not a silver bullet. As my article

briefly notes, the ideal transportation system would be powered primarily by electricity via a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle. Biofuels would provide 90 percent to 100 percent of the fuel needed by the backup engine, but that would account for only 25 percent of the total energy used by the vehicle. This strategy is presented in great detail in *Driving Our Way to Energy Independence*, available at: www.newrules.org.

DAVID MORRIS
*Vice President
Institute for Local
Self-Reliance*

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"Does that run on gasoline?
Dang. Haven't seen one of those since I was a kid."



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Up Front



“W” AS IN WONK

IN MAY, *THE NEW YORK TIMES* REPORTED THE SEMI-surreal news that George W. Bush, mulling his legacy, is hatching plans to “create a public policy center with his presidential library after he leaves office in 2009.” No other presidential library has such a policy center, and the notion that *Bush* would be the first president to become a think tank maven struck many as a bit odd. Even leaving aside Bush’s own personal intellectual curiosity (or lack thereof), his administration has something of a well-earned reputation for aggressive skepticism regarding the analyses of policy experts.

Bush is likely less interested in starting a number-crunching policy wonk lab than a big-think salon. In a then-undernoticed aside back in January, he mused to CBS News’ Bob Schieffer about leaving behind “a think tank, a place for people to talk about freedom and liberty, and the de Tocqueville model.” What Bush means by “the de Tocqueville model” remains a bit unclear. But the Frenchman certainly did pen some pithy lines worthy of slogans for the President’s legacy project. “What is the most important for democracy is not that great fortunes should not exist, but that great fortunes should not remain in the same hands,” perhaps. Or maybe: “All those who seek to destroy the liberties of a democratic nation ought to know that war is the surest and shortest means to accomplish it.”

—SAM ROSENFELD

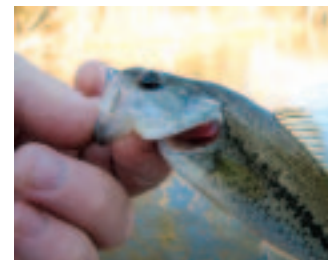
SPYING LYING

In April 2004, Bush discussed ongoing efforts to track down terrorists: “Now, by the way, any time you hear the United States government talking about wiretap, it requires—a wiretap requires a court order. Nothing has changed, by the way.” When, a year and a half later, it was revealed that the President had, in fact, authorized a program of warrantless surveillance for several years, the new administration line was articulated by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales: “[P]eople are running around saying that the United States is somehow spying on American citizens calling their neighbors. Very, very important to understand that one party to the communication has to be outside the United States.” Moreover, there has to be a “reasonable basis” for suspecting an al-Qaeda connection. Upon the revelation in May of a *second* giant National Security Agency surveillance program involving tens of millions of Americans (and billions of purely domestic calls), the President was left merely to assert that Americans’ privacy is being “fiercely protected.”

HARD OUT HERE FOR A PIMP

Only in America could it make sense for former CIA Executive Director Kyle “Dusty” Foggo to concede through a spokesperson that

he had, indeed, been present at poker parties thrown by Brent Wilkes, a lobbyist accused of bribing public officials in exchange for intelligence contracts, while simultaneously insisting that allegations that prostitutes were present at the parties are “false, outrageous, and irresponsible.” Why is participation in commercial sex worse than large-scale public corruption? Foggo isn’t alone: Former Democratic Congressman Charlie Wilson, in his day an important appropriator of intelligence funds, likewise said he’d attended the parties but denied the presence of sex workers. The gentlemen in question should be looking for excuses for their presence—“I was there for the hookers!”—and not narrowing the range of possible motives to *only* those involving massive pay-to-play corruption.



BUSH LIED, FISH DIED?

In a German tabloid in May, the President was asked what his finest moment in office had been and reportedly responded, “When I caught a 7-and-a-half-pound perch on my lake.” (The worst moment, the angler in chief reported,

ERIC PALMA

THE QUESTION: IF THE FISH THING'S NO. 1, WHAT'S THE BUSH PRESIDENCY'S SECOND BEST MOMENT?

"Bush's Ground Zero bullhorn moment, one of the best presidential images ever. He's since only looked Ahab-ish attempting to recapture it."

— **Chuck Todd**, editor in chief of The Hotline



"Having Jackson Square to himself a week after Katrina, including the run of Cafe Du Monde's kitchen."

— **Ed Kilgore**, vice president for policy, the Democratic Leadership Council



"8:45 a.m. Eastern time, September 11, 2001."

— **Randi Rhodes**, Air America Radio



was 9-11.) Immediately, people reacted with a typical mixture of amusement and depression to the President's off-the-cuff goofiness; given similar questions, Jimmy Carter had once named the Camp David Accords and Bill Clinton had picked the resolution of the crisis in Kosovo. Then the story took a turn from "foolish George" to "fibbing George" territory when it was revealed that freshwater perch max out at 4 pounds. But the White House rebounded swiftly by explaining that the English-to-German-to-English translation of early reports had mangled the species of fish he had actually named: a **large-mouth bass** rather than a perch. For once he beat the lying rap. Bush did once say, in a classic early malapropism, that he "know[s] the human being and fish can co-exist peacefully," which may be relevant here somehow.

"SPEAKING OF TOMATOES ..."

Agriculture Department employees recently received a startling e-mail memo informing them that the "President has requested that all members of his cabinet and sub-cabinet incorporate message points on the Global War on Terror into speeches, including specific examples of what each agency is doing to aid the reconstruction of Iraq." The memo provided specific instructions and examples for working irrelevant

Iraq War boosterism into Agriculture Department public statements, including referencing "a nation that is just now beginning to rebuild its own agricultural production" and describing how "Iraqis have also discussed specific



products, like **tomatoes**, which they are anxious to export into

the world community." Look for the Interior Department to get into the action soon by peppering statements about irrigation policy with the latest news of the Iraqi Interior Ministry rounding up Sunni insurgents.

GOO-GOO MIKE

Months ago, Up Front noted how disgraced (and now imprisoned) ex-lobbyist Jack Abramoff sounded like a congressional ethics czar in interview comments he made arguing that his own activities revealed the need for systemic reform. Turns out he has nothing on his partner in crime, Michael Scanlon. As *Roll Call* reported, the former operative, who has pled guilty to conspiracy charges relating to the Abramoff lobbying scandals, appeared at Johns Hopkins University on May 1 to defend his long-finished graduate thesis before four professors. The topic of the thesis? An "evaluative history of the House ethics process."

WHICH IS DUMBER?

In late April, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Alphonso Jackson boasted to a Dallas audience that political loyalty rather than quality of proposal determines who can win a lucrative HUD contract. Jackson discussed having denied a contract to a well-qualified applicant (who, he even confessed, wrote a "heck of a proposal") simply because the applicant expressed his displeasure with President Bush in a pri-

vate meeting with Jackson. "Why should I reward someone who doesn't like the President, so they can use funds to try to campaign against the President? Logic says they don't get the contract." Logic also says that what Jackson was describing is a felony. Later, his spokeswoman took the odd line of defense that the tale Jackson told in his speech was, in fact, "a made-up story." Lying for no reason about having committed a federal offense—now *that's* logical. **TAP**

REVISED INTERNAL AGRICULTURE DEPT. MEMO, CIRCA 2008



Parliament Lament

BY MARK SCHMITT

SUPPOSE THAT YOU WANTED TO FIND A LIST OF THE 30 or 40 Republican members of Congress most vulnerable to defeat this fall (and assume that you couldn't afford the *Cook Political Report*). Here's an easy trick: Take a particularly egregious piece of legislation

passed by the House, then look at the Republicans who voted against it.

For example, last year the House passed Congressman Richard Pombo's bill to "modernize" (repeal) the Endangered Species Act. Thirty-four Republicans voted no. That list is virtually identical to any list of Northeast, Midwest, and Rocky Mountain Republican incumbents considered vulnerable this year.

If there is a voter backlash against the GOP this November, it will be aimed at the far-right Republicans who've been running the party. But, like a quail-hunting Dick Cheney, it will instead take out an unintended target—the so-called "moderate" Republicans who are somewhat pro-environment, more or less pro-choice, and sometimes labor-friendly leftovers of the genteel GOP tradition. Generally speaking, these are the only Republicans in vulnerable districts.

Shed no tears for the Republican moderates. As Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said at a *Prospect*-sponsored breakfast in May, they are "enablers" of the culture of corruption. But the disappearance of Republicans who were willing to deviate occasionally from right-wing orthodoxy will mark a major change in our political life and culture. Back in 1994, many conservative Democrats were wiped out in the election and the party switching that followed. This year, whether Democrats win enough seats to control the House or not, the second shoe will drop. The hardening of our country into a parliamentary

democracy, with two parties representing distinct ideologies and political traditions, will be complete.

IS THIS A BAD THING? POLARIZED PARTISANSHIP makes it hard to get things done, unless one party controls everything, as in a real parliament. Or could it be a good thing? In 1950, political scientists issued a plea for American parties to become just like this—ideologically coherent and "responsible," modeled on the British parliamentary parties. The answer doesn't matter; this is the way it's going to be. It may turn out that the political framework of the 20th century—in which conservative and moderate factions in each of the two parties overlapped, and shifting bipartisan coalitions were always the way things got done—was the anomaly, a living fossil dating from the peculiar history of the post-Reconstruction South.

Anomalous or not, that framework is exactly what almost everyone in Washington was trained for. We were all brought up knowing that the first thing you must do to pass legislation is to build a solid bipartisan coalition. But soon, whether we choose partisanship or not, we will all be absorbed into a more partisan world, and those who fight that trend will be left behind.

It has become an article of faith on Democratic blogs such as DailyKos that progressive interest groups betray their own causes by sometimes endorsing Republicans. The Sierra Club and NARAL endorsements of Republican Senator Lincoln Chafee have been particular points of controversy. But it's not that NARAL and the Sierra Club are idiots. Up to now, it made perfect sense for them to endorse Chafee. You reward your friends, especially when they have stood up to pressure from within their own party. But at a certain point, rewarding friendly Republicans crosses the line into desperately trying to prop up a few so that you can still seem bipartisan—at the price of legitimating a majority whose highest priority after tax cuts is the evisceration of environmental regulation. Making things even more complicated is the fact that most of these issue advocacy groups operate under tax rules that require them to be nonpartisan, get their support from funders who are skittish about partisanship, and usually have one or two Republicans (of the genteel variety) on their boards. Adjusting to a parliamentary world won't be easy.

One of the arguments of the 1950 political scientists was for this very result, to reduce the influence of "the pressure groups," because ideas would move through the parties rather than through external, unaccountable groups. But the political framework of the late 20th century had a lot going for it. In theory if not always in practice, it could find consensus and more stable solutions to public problems. But it's going, and in its place we will have a more rigid system in which the parties themselves dominate. The conservatives probably figured this out first and embraced it, thus explaining much of their political success in the last decade. Liberals can lament the loss of the old pluralist world, but we had better move on and deal with the new. **TAP**

*Shed no tears for
GOP moderates;
but once they go,
we'll be in a new
and even more
polarized world.*

Courting an Advantage

BY NAN ARON

THE TEMPORARY LULL IN JUDICIAL CONFIRMATION battles has come to an end. Hoping to ramp up its base in time for the midterm elections, the White House recently promised supporters that it will flood the Senate with more right-wing appeals court nominees.

Simultaneously, Senate Republicans have pushed for votes on existing ones, some of whom are so divisive that Majority Leader Bill Frist has not acted until now. Meanwhile, conservative activists sit like vultures, hoping that the 86-year-old John Paul Stevens retires and gives President Bush a crack at naming a third justice.

For their part, most Democrats prefer taking up almost any subject to avoid having to talk about judges. Where Republicans see opportunities by scoring points with their base, Democrats see pitfalls, believing that every vote against a nominee invites voter discontent. Americans care about vigorous enforcement of civil-rights laws, as well as worker, health and safety, and environmental protections. But Democrats have not found a way either to articulate their own affirmative vision or to expose Republican talking points about “judicial restraint” and “interpreting, not making the law” for the simplistic, counter-factual demagoguery that it is.

With a third Bush high court nominee potentially in the offing, the time could be now or never to flip the script.

IF PRESIDENT BUSH GETS THE OPPORTUNITY to nominate another Supreme Court justice, the trend toward weakening, even undoing, constitutional and statutory protections will accelerate. We might also witness judicial accommodation of this administration’s unprecedented claims to nearly unfettered

executive power. If the nominee were to be young, a substantial new, staunchly conservative bloc could dominate American law and life for more than a generation. Remember: Clarence Thomas is only 57, Alito is 56, and Roberts just turned 51.

Notwithstanding their advantages, Republicans have given Democrats an opening to find their voices. It presented itself (again) during the Alito confirmation process. Although Alito’s lengthy record showed him to be one of the most aggressively conservative jurists in the country, Republicans billed him as a moderate, avoided talking about his legal views, and advanced a political strategy of blasting anyone who pursued such legitimate discussion—senators, academics, the press—as engaging in “despicable” behavior. Why? Because they know the public won’t embrace the throwback legal regime that movement conservatives have long been trying to revive. The question is whether Democratic senators will exploit this continuing opportunity.

With the White House and its Senate allies spoiling for a courts fight and the President’s poll numbers dwindling, there’s no better time to stand up for good

judges, to articulate the dangers posed by jurists “in the mold of Scalia and Thomas,” and to present the compelling vision of the law that progressives possess. But to do that, Democrats must make judgeships and the courts a priority.

That means explaining why independent courts are essential to upholding our rights and protections and why today it is “activist” conservatives who are trying to transform the law. It means focusing laser-like on nominees’ legal views and forgoing the almost always-futile quest for “smoking-gun” disqualifiers. It means insisting on consequences when a nominee refuses to divulge what he or she thinks. It means wresting control of the confirmation process from the “Gang of 14,” which came together last year to avert a showdown over the use of the filibuster. To their credit, the Gang theoretically preserved the prerogative of a substantial Senate minority to moderate presidential overreaching. But in practice, the victory has proven hollow, since the Gang’s seven Democrats seem unwilling to exercise that prerogative if the objections to a nominee are rooted in the one thing that matters most—judicial philosophy.

For now, all eyes will turn to the skirmishes taking place in the Senate around a handful of appellate nominees. Because it is in the appeals courts that the law is often shaped, these are important appointments. To be sure, Democrats remain at a numeric disadvantage in challenging them, at least until November and perhaps thereafter. But Republicans’ renewed push to play politics with judges nevertheless gives Democrats the opportunity to chart a new course. The 42 votes cast against Alito provided a good toehold. Democrats should now, with coherence, press forward. **TAP**

*Forget the search
for “smoking
guns” and battle
it out over what
matters: judicial
philosophy.*

Nan Aron is president of the Alliance for Justice, an association of public-interest groups in Washington, D.C.

Dispatches

"With the federal government's threat to revoke the Medicaid waiver and the health lobby pressing the issue, Romney had no choice."

— PAGE 14



What Would Dracula Drink?: Northfield Laboratories' PolyHeme

SCIENCE

BLOOD NOT-SO-SIMPLE

Should unconsenting civilians be used in tests for a blood substitute?

BY JEANNE LENZER

A "NO-CONSENT" MEDICAL STUDY of an experimental blood substitute is creating an uproar among researchers and bioethicists. Controversy over the study, which is under way at 31 hospitals across the nation, is pulling back the curtain on similar studies ready to be launched under President Bush's "war on terrorism" as well as Project Bioshield, an ambitious plan to protect citizens against chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attacks through the development of commercial products, such as vaccines for anthrax and smallpox, and the development of blood substitutes.

Bush signed Bioshield into law on July 21, 2004, authorizing \$5.6 billion

for the project. One Bioshield recipient, Northfield Laboratories, a small biotech company in Illinois, received \$4.9 million, administered by the U.S. Army, in the past two fiscal years to develop PolyHeme, the fake blood at the center of the controversy.

The Defense Department has spent decades and millions of dollars in pursuit of the Holy Grail of trauma medicine: a blood substitute that doesn't have to be refrigerated (battlefield conditions don't allow that) and that doesn't have to be matched by blood type (a process that can take more than an hour). Despite initial enthusiasm for several products, most have had to be abandoned when danger-

ous side effects, such as strokes and heart attacks, emerged.

Despite decades of development, PolyHeme has failed to win Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval. But the FDA did approve the current study, which was launched in 2003. If this study is positive, Northfield stands a shot at winning the FDA approval necessary to market PolyHeme commercially.

Should this happen, one of Northfield's first customers will likely be the Army, with which Northfield says it has had stepped-up dialogue since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. However, PolyHeme isn't being tested on soldiers. It's being administered to civilians under a rarely used provision known as the "emergency research consent waiver." The provision, codified by the FDA in 1996, allows researchers to enroll patients, without their consent, for approved studies, in life-threatening circumstances when the patient is too ill to consent and a patient proxy or guardian can't be reached. The waiver is necessary, according to Northfield's Web site, since it "is expected that patients enrolled in this trial will be unable to provide informed consent because [of] the nature and extent of their injuries."

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS? FACED with bleeding to death, wouldn't most of us rather get experimental blood over nothing at all? And since many patients with severe blood loss are unconscious, doesn't it make sense to allow doctors to enroll us without our consent?

The answers to those questions are not quite straightforward. First, it appears that PolyHeme is being tested in the wrong population. The standard of care for acute blood loss in the United States is human blood. That means that no other product has been found to be as safe and effective as real blood—something the civilian population has ready access to in

emergencies. Dr. Robert Solomon, chairman of the ethics committee of the American College of Emergency Physicians, says, "If you look at trauma units in the U.S., there really isn't a demand for blood substitutes." The American Red Cross agrees, saying, "We are unaware of any specific areas where trauma care is affected by a shortage of available blood."

Northfield says its product isn't meant to replace blood in hospitals, but is only intended for use on ambulances when no blood is available. However, most ambulance rides in urban areas, where the study is being carried out, last only minutes and once at the hospital, Type O blood, known as the "universal donor," can be given immediately. However, the study protocol allows PolyHeme to be given for up to 12 hours after arrival at the hospital in those patients who received

The board changed the rule and the Duke study continues to enroll patients.

Worse than the opt-out system, charges Solomon, is that the public was misled about the safety of PolyHeme during "community consultations." Before drug companies can launch no-consent emergency research, the FDA requires that they hold public meetings during which the public is informed of the potential risks and benefits of the clinical trial. But not many people ever learn about the study to make a decision to opt out. According to Ross McKinney Jr., vice dean for research at Duke University School of Medicine, community consultations around Duke "reached about 450 people"—something he acknowledged during a radio interview on March 17, was only a "tiny fraction" of Durham County's 8 million residents. And records on file at the FDA show that the

that the problem in the halted study might have been physician inexperience in administering PolyHeme.) Since then, the product has not been changed. Worse, in the current study, patients with risk factors such as high blood pressure and diabetes are not excluded.

Sofia Twaddell, a Northfield spokeswoman, says that companies could simply enroll all patients in no-consent trials and that Northfield, in providing an opt-out mechanism, is going further in protecting patients than FDA emergency-research regulations require. "Nowhere [in the FDA regulation] does it say you need to have an opt-out mechanism," Twaddell says. "The FDA's guidance suggests *considering* an opt-out."

FOR SOLDIERS, FACED WITH THE RISK of bleeding to death on the battlefield where there is no ready access to real blood, a 5 percent or even 25 percent risk of a heart attack with PolyHeme might look like a good deal. But for civilians, who are likely to get blood within minutes, a 25 percent risk of a heart attack might tilt the risk-benefit analysis in an entirely different direction.

So why isn't PolyHeme being tested on soldiers, for whom the cost-benefit analysis is a better match? Company representatives and the military claim they can't test a blood product under combat conditions. Twaddell said it's too hard to conduct studies in battlefield conditions. "The Army did it once with hemostatic bandages and they couldn't keep track of them—they got lost. It's very hard to keep data when people are shooting at you." But some medical experts say that's silly. They point to earlier emergency-research studies conducted in war zones and in chaotic settings, such as steroids for head injuries and defibrillators in shopping malls, that in their details undermine claims about the problems of testing fake blood.

The real reason PolyHeme isn't being tested on soldiers may lie in the broken trust between the military and its recruits. In the wake of the Gulf War and serious concerns about the mandatory anthrax vaccine, soldiers protested and organized. An October 2004 court ruling forced the military to allow soldiers to decline the vaccine.

What Northfield didn't say is that an earlier study showed that 10 of 81 patients who received the substitute had heart attacks; two of them died.

the blood substitute during the ambulance ride. Leonard Glantz, associate dean of the School of Public Health at Boston University, says his institution turned down the PolyHeme study because "it breached basic ethical requirements."

What's more, Northfield chose an opt-out form of consent, meaning that everyone within range of the participating hospitals who is injured severely enough to require blood is automatically enrolled in the PolyHeme study unless they are conscious and decline or they learned about the study in advance and chose to wear a blue, plastic, hospital-type bracelet that states, "I decline the Northfield PolyHeme study." Opt-out studies are desirable from the perspective of drug companies, since by default they enroll far more patients than opt-in studies. The concept of no-consent studies is also controversial and new—so new that in early 2005 one of the sites testing PolyHeme, Duke University, had to get the state medical board to change North Carolina's Patient Bill of Rights, requiring patients to give informed consent prior to enrollment in a study.

few community members who did show up were reassured by study investigators that "in clinical trials to date, PolyHeme has demonstrated no clinically relevant adverse effects."

What Northfield didn't tell the public is that an earlier, unpublished study of PolyHeme showed that 10 of 81 patients who received the blood substitute suffered heart attacks and two of those patients died. None of the 71 patients treated with real blood had heart attacks. The study, performed on patients undergoing repair of aortic aneurysms, was stopped prematurely in 2001. (The failure to report halted studies is causing serious ethical debate among scientists, who say that such "negative publication bias" causes researchers to reach invalid conclusions.) Northfield, confronted with the unpublished study results after they were reported in *The Wall Street Journal* in February, said the heart attacks were unrelated to PolyHeme and that the aneurysm patients had cardiovascular risk factors. But patients in the study who received real human blood shared the same risk factors. (Northfield also claimed

With support for the Iraq War at an all-time low and with the difficulty President Bush faces in finding more recruits, experimental testing on soldiers may be politically risky—especially in view of the ugly history of military testing on recruits. “Having soldiers walk under the mushroom cloud after atomic detonations—that’s not wholesome,” said Kenneth Kipnis, a bioethicist and professor of philosophy at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The PolyHeme study has already enrolled about 600 of the needed 720 patients, and some patients have indeed been given blood not only in the ambulance but also after arrival at the hospital, where real human blood would have been available. Worse, future projects funded under Project Bioshield are eligible to invoke the same “emergency research consent waiver,” meaning that

untold numbers of patients in untold numbers of communities could be opting in just by not opting out, when they arrive in hospitals too unwell to actively refuse to participate in the study.

At least one other blood substitute, Hemopure, manufactured by a company called Biopure, appears likely to be tested using the same opt-out consent system. Asked whether the study protocol will use an opt-out or opt-in consent, Biopure’s spokesman said the opt-out design is “how they are currently done.” A spokesperson for the Navy, which is running the Hemopure study, said it would be premature to comment on consent waivers because “there could be potential changes in protocol.” Let’s hope. **TAP**

Jeanne Lenzer is a freelance medical investigative journalist living in New York.

But those hungrily seeking a serious reformer should look elsewhere.

UNDERSTANDING WHY REQUIRES A quick tour through the genesis of the Massachusetts reforms. Media coverage of such plans tends to be personality-based, all the better to tell an easy, compelling story. But such achievements are rarely attributable to the Herculean efforts of a single individual. Credit—and for that matter, blame—disperses more widely, and structural factors often matter above all. And so it was with the Massachusetts bill, which grew out of a long-fighting and notably mature health-reform advocacy movement, veto-proof Democratic majorities in the state’s House and Senate, a universal health-care ballot initiative that frightened the business community, a federal threat to withhold Medicaid money in the absence of health reform, and a variety of demographic and policy realities unique to Massachusetts.

There is no doubt, of course, that vastly expanding health-care coverage is a tricky proposition. But doing so in Massachusetts is less tricky than doing so virtually anywhere else in the nation. The state is notably wealthy, decidedly liberal, and overwhelmingly insured. Indeed, a mere 11 percent of Massachusetts residents lack health coverage, 7 percent less than the national average. Moreover, the state already had a dedicated pot of money for providing health care to those who failed the wallet biopsy.

Generally, hospitals are forced to care for the uninsured, but they are not compensated for the effort. So they raise prices for insured patients—a sort of invisible tax. But the Massachusetts hospital lobby is particularly powerful, and it had long before pushed for a state-run uncompensated care fund, financed through general revenue and taxes on hospitals and businesses. That tax meant the state started with \$540 million to play with—\$540 million that wouldn’t require the raising of new revenues.

Meanwhile, the federal government, unhappy with the free ride Massachusetts was offering its uninsured population, threatened to pull its Medicaid

POLITICS

CREDIT HOG

Mitt Romney got more props than he deserved for health-care reform.

BY EZRA KLEIN

THE BILL CLINTON OF THE 2008 election is not, in fact, likely to share his surname. Hillary will probably run, to be sure. But the part Clinton played in 1992—that of an attractive, technocratic, successful governor from a state normally hostile to his kind and boasting substantive accomplishments on issues his party rarely touches—will be played by a New England conservative named Mitt Romney.

For the last four years, Romney, a Republican, has governed the right wing’s geographical *bête noire*, Massachusetts. More surprisingly, he’s made something of a success of it, eschewing tax increases (though loading up on so-called “user fees”) while transforming a \$3 billion deficit into a \$700 million surplus. That sound you hear is the United States Chamber of Commerce salivating. More impressively, Romney faced down the state’s thorny health-care crisis, negotiating with a Democratic legislature to craft one of the most exciting comprehensive reform bills in the nation.

It’s the sort of story the press loves: a competent, results-oriented executive corralling his state’s rowdy, opposition party-dominated legislature into solving a seemingly intractable policy problem. Horse-race handicapper extraordinaire Charlie Cook called Romney “[p]robably the brightest and most talented candidate in the GOP field.” Writing in *Time*, Joe Klein gushed that he’s “the Republican who thinks big on health care,” and called Romney’s plan “rather remarkable.”

And that it was. But it wasn’t just Romney’s plan, and while opinions in Massachusetts differ on exactly who deserves the credit, there is unanimity on two points: first, that Romney will base his presidential campaign on this achievement; and second, that he’s exhibited neither the interest nor the ideological flexibility to transport it to the national stage. He may be the Republican who thinks big on health care, and as a presidential candidate, he’ll certainly be the Republican who talks big on health care.

waiver, worth more than \$700 million over 2007 and 2008. If the state wanted to keep the money, it had to reform its system. As if that was pressure enough, on Romney's right, the Health Care for All lobby, along with the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, had laid the groundwork for a ballot initiative creating an expansive universal health-insurance program, to be financed primarily through new payroll and cigarette taxes.

The lobby was no joke. Health reform, after all, has a long and storied history in the state. In 1988, then-governor Michael Dukakis signed into law a universal system based on an employer mandate. The mandate, which would have forced employers to either offer care or pay the state to do so, was never implemented and got quietly repealed a year later. But much of the plan did take effect, and coverage was significantly expanded. In 1996, the forces of reform won another round, widening the MassHealth insurance program to include some 350,000 low-income residents of the state. The arc of health-care reform was toward greater progressivity,

and it excited a powerful advocacy community determined to reach the holy land of universal care.

IT WOULD ALMOST BE FAIR TO SAY that the advocates had an ally in the governor's mansion. Romney, to his credit, was open to health-care reform. Hungry for higher office but lacking in substantive legislative achievements, Romney began studying the issue with an eye toward making it his own in the spring of 2003. In May 2004, Ron Preston, then Romney's health and human services secretary, offered a plan that achieved near-universality through savvy use of the uncompensated-care fund and a hefty tax on employers unwilling to offer benefits. Romney didn't quite throw Preston out of his office, but nor did his final product look much like Preston's bill. What Romney offered, in July 2005, was an individual mandate with little concern for affordability and less for comprehensiveness. It would have likely ushered in a host of plans with massive deductibles and serious cost sharing; coverage, to be

sure, but sparse coverage that shifted risk toward individuals.

Romney's relatively stingy plan had little chance of becoming law. But it was an admission that, if the ballot initiative were to be headed off and the federal waiver preserved, *something* would have to be done. And on some level, Romney held surprisingly few cards, given the state's veto-proof House and Senate Democratic majorities. The Massachusetts Senate, led by Robert Travaglini, was willing to accept less comprehensive measures, but the state's House, under Speaker Salvatore DiMasi, held firm to an expanded version on Romney's bill, this one coupling Romney's individual mandate with an employer mandate, free rider provisions (a method of penalizing large businesses that don't offer insurance), heavier subsidies, and an as-of-yet undefined "affordability clause" that demanded insurance be affordable if individuals were to be forced to purchase it.

And in the end, that's the bill that emerged. The employer mandate, requiring no more than a \$295 per-worker tax on employers who refuse to offer health care, wasn't particularly substantial, but it exists, and could easily be raised in the future—a future that might come soon, given that Romney's successor is expected to be a Democrat. The program was folded into an appropriations bill so Romney could line-item veto the most liberal portions, a savvy bit of kabuki theatre that will allow Romney to distance himself from the final plan's employer mandate and increased progressivity on the campaign trail.

Still, Romney received—and deserved—plaudits for his flexibility and willingness to cut a deal. But with the federal government's threat to revoke the Medicaid waiver and the health lobby's ballot initiative pressing the issue, Romney had no choice. And while the end result was relatively progressive, the Legislature's Democratic majority ensured that it couldn't really emerge any other way. What Romney did was insist there be no revenue increases to fund the plan. "He just wasn't going to look at any new taxes," said John McDonough, president of Health Care for All, "even the silly cigarette tax we put on

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the table ... He's a serious no-new-taxes kinda guy." One of the architects of the bill, who was insistent that Romney deserves credit for its passage, nevertheless admitted, "I think [a national universal-care program] isn't really where he's at. He's been so clear with his no-new-taxes view, and to do it at the national level would require significant taxes and he just won't support that. His heart may be in the right place, but he won't fight the political fight of raising taxes for it."

And if he's unwilling to engage that battle, he's useless. Any similar plan on

the national stage would require new taxes, or at least new revenue. Massachusetts boasted both an uncommonly slight uninsured population and a pre-existing pot o' cash to pay for their care. The national situation isn't nearly so rosy. Unwilling to raise taxes and unconstrained by a Democratic Congress, Romney may run on health care, but he's unlikely to fight for it. And the punditocracy, so excited by the Massachusetts plan, should demand some sign to the contrary before voting him "Most Likely to Reform Health Care" in the class of 2008. **TAP**

EGYPT

WOMAN AT POINT ZERO

Egypt's most famous feminist seeks reform the second time around.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

CAIRO, EGYPT—

THE VIEW FROM THE 26TH FLOOR of Nawal el Saadawi's apartment in Shoubra Gardens, a working-class neighborhood in east Cairo, may once have been spectacular. But as I sit in a rattan chair in Saadawi's sunroom, enjoying a cool breeze and a view of the nearby Nile through the haze of a Cairo afternoon, I notice the rooftops below us are awash in trash and dusty satellite TV dishes. Like so much of Cairo, the tall modern buildings constructed during the heyday of Egypt's post-independence rush toward the future have seen their sheen since dimmed by decades of neglect and haphazard growth.

Saadawi, Egypt's most famous feminist and a political activist since that more optimistic era, sits on a couch in her well-kept, book-filled living room, giving an interview to a pretty young reporter from *Al-Dustour*. The paper, an independent newsweekly banned in 1998 and reconstituted in 2005, is among the most important opposition media in Cairo, and its revival was a sign of a new spirit of openness that had seemed to be blowing through Egypt since late 2004, ultimately culminating in the first multi-party presidential elections in Egyptian history last September. Saadawi, who is also a novel-

ist and physician, understands the risks inherent in such moments and in being part of the movements that try to make them happen—she was imprisoned for 22 days during Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's notorious 1981 crackdown on feminists, intellectuals, and Islamists. She



Good Night, Cairene: Nawal el Saadawi

also understands the power of less obvious forms of social control. The young reporter wears a head scarf, but Saadawi, a thrice-married secularist, lets her own chin-length white hair tumble freely in soft waves above her blue-striped button-down shirt. After the reporter leaves,

Saadawi tells me she is trying to convince the young woman to give up her scarf.

At the ripe age of 74, the woman who first broke barriers as Egypt's director of public health in 1972—and then was ousted for her political views—has once again placed herself at the center of Egyptian political and social reform. Last spring and summer, she stood against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the presidential elections, running on a platform of women's rights and democratic reform before ultimately boycotting the elections. Now Saadawi is working to revive the Egyptian Women's Union, a coalition of feminists and women's civil society institutions she hopes will be able to win real reforms over time, but which was shuttered under pressure from Mubarak in 1991. With the winds of change at her back, Saadawi is gambling that the environment in Egypt may finally be open enough to organize again. "We were trying to establish the Egyptian Women's Union since 1999, but they obstructed our efforts up to now," she explains. "But we are gaining more members and power so maybe we will succeed this time."

THE PAST TWO YEARS HAVE SEEN AN unprecedented opening—and now, quite possibly a closing—of an era of political possibilities in Egypt. On December 12, 2004, a pro-democratic reform movement held what *Islamica Magazine* has called "the first explicitly anti-Mubarak protests in 24 years." The group sponsoring the protests, the Egyptian Movement for Change, became known as Kifaya for its simple slogan: "Enough!" Sadaawi calls them "my good friends." Though its supporters numbered only in the hundreds, the group's impact was immediate. Mubarak came under pressure from U.S. leaders who had grown temporarily interested in pushing for democratic reforms among authoritarian U.S. allies. After Ayman Nour, the leader of the liberal opposition al-Ghad or "Tomorrow" Party was arrested, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice canceled a planned visit to Egypt in March 2005. Mubarak promised reforms and set a date for the first multi-party presidential elections in Egyptian history that fall. Nine candidates

ran against him in September, though by then, Sadaawi had withdrawn from the race. "I was against Mubarak, and I had a program against his program," Saadawi tells me, having joined me in her sunroom overlooking the Nile. But she boycotted the elections in the end. "It was no democracy," she says. "It was dictatorship under the guise of democracy, so I boycotted."

Mubarak won re-election with more than 88 percent of the vote, and today Nour is again in prison convicted on forgery charges he claims are trumped up. By spring 2006, Kifaya protesters had become a regular feature of life in Cairo, using cell phones and text messages to organize small protests of 15 to 50 people who would rapidly distribute leaflets before melting back into the dense metropolitan population of more than 16 million. From an American perspective, such tiny gatherings would hardly seem a threat, but more formal protests of less than 200 people held in late April and mid-May in support of two judges on trial for their refusal to sanction rigged elections were met by thousands of riot police—armed with plastic shields and long, bark-covered sticks—who beat and arrested male and female protesters alike, as well as journalists. With America's regional power dwindling because of the Iraq War, and with the Bush administration distracted by the confrontation with Iran, Mubarak once again feels authorized to wield his authoritarian power roughly. At press time, those arrested during the late April and early May protests remain in prison.

SAADAWI ATTENDED SOME OF THE Searly Kifaya protests, as well as anti-Iraq War demonstrations in the United States and Europe. But she is focused on building what she hopes will be lasting independent nongovernmental organizations. It's a challenge in a state where even the mosques are licensed by the government. A previous successful organizing effort in 1982 led to the creation of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association. It's still active internationally, but the group foundered in Egypt in the early 1990s, when its Egyptian branch was shut down along with the Women's

Union. The risks that the new grass-roots organizing efforts will also be cut down are high. "If we become very powerful and threaten the status quo and the government, of course they will try to close us, as happened because we were 3,000 members in 1991," says Saadawi. "If we become 3,000 members and active, then they will close us. So it's a struggle."

Meanwhile, Saadawi the writer remains in high demand, with interviews stacked up one after another even on a Saturday, a brisk schedule of international appearances, and a new novel in the works. After being forced into exile from Egypt in 1992 by Islamists who placed her name on their death lists, the acclaimed author of *Woman at Point Zero* and more than 20 other books became a global star, appearing at conferences and marches around the world. She spent four years living in the United States, teaching courses on feminism and dissidence at Duke and other universities, before finally being able to return to Cairo. Now she splits her time between Egypt and overseas teaching appointments.

A secularist who so enjoys thumbing her nose at the restrictions of the Salafists that she offers me a beer mid-interview, Saadawi is also trying to warn Egyptian women that the Westernized mores they are adopting may be no more liberating than the traditions they are leaving behind. She decries makeup as a "post-

modern veil," which leaves women just as focused on male ideas of female self-presentation as the head scarves Muslim women wear. And, while female circumcision was banned by decree in 1996, the practice remains widespread; a 2000 U.S. Agency for International Development-funded survey "found that the practice is nearly universal among women of reproductive age in Egypt," declining to "only" 78 percent among those under age 20.

Such facts of life make the position of Egyptian women even more confusing as they negotiate a path between the overt visual sensuality of pop stars like the midriff-baring Ruby—Egypt is, with Lebanon, one of the two major producers of pop culture and music in the Arab world—and the growing prevalence of the ultra-conservatives' facial veils and thick black gloves and hose, which leave no part of the body exposed to air. Saadawi would consider it a major achievement if Egyptian women could even win equal inheritance rights, let alone real freedom. But that will require more than her individual action. It will require two things Egyptian reformers lack: real support from the West for democracy and freedom of association in Egypt, and not just for individual speech. "We have some democracy, but so long as I am alone," she says. "So long as Nawal el Saadawi is alone and I am not organizing women." **TAP**

FRANCE

VIVE LES JEUNES

The French students were right to protest—and we can prove it!

BY DAVID R. HOWELL AND JOHN SCHMITT

IN EARLY APRIL, AFTER WEEKS OF massive student demonstrations, the French government backed down and withdrew its proposed changes in national labor law. Under French law, workers are protected from arbitrary firings by a system that requires employers to justify dismissals. The government, most notably Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, wanted to allow employers the freedom to fire workers under age 26

without reason and with little or no notice or severance pay. The hope was that employers would respond by hiring more young workers.

When the government backed down, a U.S. media consensus emerged that French youth are stupendously misguided—they don't understand their own interests; they have an outdated, childlike dependence on the state for protection against the real world of mar-

ket forces; many are simply lazy and prefer the dole to work.

But in truth, the real unemployment rates of U.S. and French youth are roughly comparable. And, though it got no attention in the American press, French employers already have substantial flexibility with young workers. In the 1980s, to address concerns about rising unemployment, the French government permitted employers to introduce temporary employment contracts. With these, employers could hire new workers for a fixed period ranging from three months to a maximum of 18 months. This probationary period enabled employers to ensure a good match, before moving workers to a regular employment contract, with more worker protections.

French employers adopted this option enthusiastically. In 2000, 44 percent of 15- to 24-year-old employed workers were on temporary contracts. But even temporary workers cannot be terminated without any cause. The proposed law would have created a new contract for those under age 26 with a far longer probationary period of two years, during which workers could be fired for no reason.

This may seem a minor change to Americans accustomed to an “employment-at-will” system, which is standard for most workers of all ages in the United States (notable exceptions being union members, tenured faculty, and government employees). Perhaps because we take the absence of worker rights for granted at home, the response in the U.S. media was scathing. Even the relatively liberal *New York Times* editorial board pronounced that French youth unemployment is “catastrophic” and that the “real threat” of the demonstrations is that the French government “may be dissuaded from attempting the broader social and economic reforms that France requires, both for its own future and for the future of the European Union.”

In fact, polls showed that large majorities of all ages in France opposed the change. If employers could hire young people without the safeguards available to even temporary workers, many newly precarious jobs would go to the less-pro-

BY THE NUMBERS

Key labor market indicators for male youth (15-24) for the U.S. and France, 2004
(U = unemployed, E = employed)

| | U.S. | France |
|---|-------|--------|
| 1. Unemployment rate (U/U+E) | 11.8% | 20.8% |
| 2. Labor force participation rate (U+E/population) | 70.2% | 41.4% |
| 3. Employment to population rate (E/population) | 61.9% | 32.8% |
| 4. Unemployment to population rate (U/population) | 8.3% | 8.6% |

— Source: Statistical annex, *OECD Employment Outlook 2005*

tected young, and the whole system of worker rights could erode.

CAN SUCH A HIGHLY EDUCATED POPULATION be so misinformed? If we take a closer look at the facts, it is clear that American media pundits and professional economists got the story wrong.

On close examination, the oft-cited official unemployment statistics are highly misleading. With a more appropriate measure of youth unemployment, French and U.S. rates are almost identical. Most French young people counted as “not employed” are actually in school. For young people, the employment rate is not a good measure of a well-functioning labor market and social system, especially for 16- to 19-year-olds, most of whom belong in school.

At 22 percent, the nominal youth unemployment rate in France is double the U.S. rate of 11 percent, and even further above the U.K. rate of 9.9 percent and the Dutch rate of 8.1 percent (these are standardized rates, tabulated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD). But consider how this statistic is constructed. The “catastrophic” French rate measures the unemployed as a share of the total labor force (the employed and the unemployed). Figured this way, the difference between the United States and France is huge: In 2004 only 32.8 percent of French male 15- to 24-year-olds were employed (for at least one hour in the survey reference week), compared to 61.9 percent of comparable U.S. men.

Yet, actual unemployment as a share of the total youth population is about the same in the two countries. Why? Mainly

because American students often hold part-time jobs (and are thus counted as “employed”), while French ones don’t.

As the table shows, for male youth the unemployment-to-population rate is 8.3 percent in the United States and 8.6 percent in France (subtract row 3 from row 2). The unemployment-to-population rate for female youth is lower in both countries: 7.4 percent in France and 6.5 percent in the United States. So, using the proper yardstick, the ratio of unemployed youth to the youth population, the youth unemployment problem in France and the United States is almost indistinguishable.

In the current world economy, school is surely where most young people belong. In 2003, the vast majority of 15- to 19-year-olds in both France (83.8 percent) and the United States (82.9 percent) were enrolled in school. Sure enough, the big difference is in part-time jobs. In the United States, 23.1 percent of 16- to 19-year-old students were also working, compared to only 1.8 percent of French teenagers. This disparity creates most of the higher statistical unemployment rate.

Which mix of employment and enrollment is preferable? Clearly we want as many 15- to 19-year-olds as possible to be in school, and both countries have succeeded fairly well in achieving this goal. It’s less clear that U.S. teenagers—and the future quality of the work force—are better off with so many students in low-wage, part-time work, especially if their need to work mainly reflects higher U.S. poverty rates and the much greater costs of higher education in the United States.

Is it good to also keep more 20- to 24-

year-olds in school? A much higher share of French young adults are still enrolled in school (51.1 percent in France compared to 35.0 percent in the United States). In 2003, while about one-third of French young adults were not in school and held jobs, almost half (48.5 percent) of their U.S. counterparts were out of school and working. Which is better? If French students are taking advantage of schooling to build skills and capacities, that's clearly beneficial. But if a large share of French youth are just biding their time in school mainly because they can't get decent work, as some argue, their higher enrollment rate may just mask inadequate job opportunities.

A fair measure of poor job-market performance and social dysfunction is the

MOST U.S. ECONOMISTS BLAME employment protection for high French joblessness, especially high youth unemployment. And France does have some of the strictest employment protection in Europe. Yet based on the available economic evidence, it's improbable that scaling back such protections would reduce unemployment.

Apart from stricter protections for temporary workers, France's employment protection laws are comparable to those of low-unemployment European countries like Austria, Norway, and the Netherlands, all with unemployment rates similar to, or lower than, the United States. (The OECD gives France a 2003 employment-protection score of 2.5, Austria 2.4, Norway 2.3, and the Netherlands

training, job search, subsidy, and placement services ("active labor market" policies). This system has worked well in the small, dynamic Danish economy—and has required substantial public spending of fully 1.6 percent of its gross domestic product. At U.S. economic scale, that would mean about \$200 billion a year! Surely the same neo-liberals in the United States and France would disapprove of such an expansion of "big government."

In sum, the widely held view, repeatedly parroted in the U.S. media, that French economic performance is poor and that French employment performance is catastrophic because of worker protections, flies in the face of the evidence. The media scorn for the French students offers a striking example of the ability of free-market ideology to trump the facts.

How might employers respond to the proposed changes, allowing them to fire workers under age 26 at will? The French students and other critics are correct to warn that employers would likely substitute younger workers for older ones, and then be tempted to fire them when they approach age 26. This revolving door would mainly affect the distribution of jobs between younger and older workers—and further entrench a dual labor market—but not expand the overall number of job opportunities.

YES, FRANCE HAS A SHORTAGE OF jobs, for young and old. But the withering attack on the French and their welfare state reflects both a greatly overstated view of the real youth unemployment problem, and a wildly exaggerated belief in how employment protection affects joblessness. The French have good reasons to be cautious about changes in their social model—and the French students demonstrated more leadership than many French politicians and most American critics. **TAP**

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The scorn for the French students in the U.S. media coverage of the protests is a striking example of the ability of free-market ideology to trump the facts.

share of young adults (ages 20 to 24) who are neither in school nor employed. On this criterion, France and the United States perform almost identically: In 2000, the share of all young adults not in school and not employed was 14.1 percent in France and 14.4 percent in the United States. This compares, for example, to 15.4 percent for the U.K. and just 7 percent for the Netherlands.

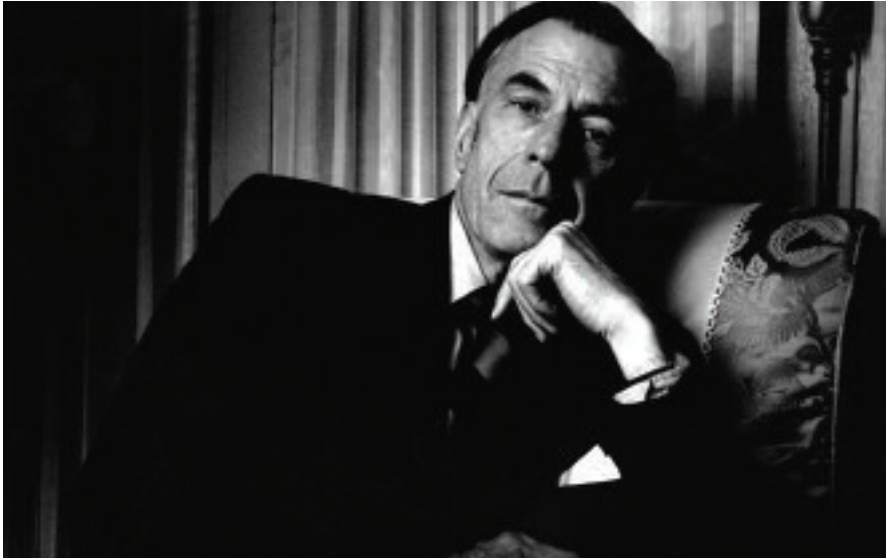
The productivity levels of French and American workers also suggest that the high youth educational-enrollment rates and low youth employment rates pay off for France. According to three different prominent sources of hourly labor productivity statistics, French workers are, on average, between 6 and 16 percent more productive than their American counterparts.

One other key fact: Despite the higher hourly productivity—which means more output produced by relatively fewer workers—the French economy has actually produced almost as much employment growth as the United States since President Bush came into office (3.1 percent versus 3.5 percent growth between 2000 and 2005).

3.1.) According to the OECD's 1999, 2004, and 2006 evaluations of the effects of employment protection laws, overall unemployment is not significantly related to such laws. The OECD finds some evidence that such protections may affect youth unemployment, but even here, their conclusion was that the results should be "considered with caution."

At the margins, these protections may make employers somewhat less willing to hire new workers—because they might be hard to fire later if demand falls, or the workers turn out to be a bad fit. But, then, the *purpose* of such protections is to make it harder for employers to dismiss workers capriciously. This has the beneficial effect of helping to keep employment rates higher than they otherwise would be in economic downturns.

One middle ground is Denmark's "flexicurity" system, and perhaps France should move in this direction. Denmark has relaxed employment protections (about halfway between the United States and France, according to the OECD index), but the Danes offset that with much more generous short-run unemployment benefits and an extremely rich mix of job



Ken

BY RICHARD PARKER

"Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assaults of thoughts on the unthinking."

— JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH LOVED words. Above all, he loved words he and others wrote about him. On this, "Galbraith's First Law" left no confusion: "Modesty is a vastly overrated virtue."

So it's probably best that Ken Galbraith, who died April 29 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at age 97, missed his obituaries. Far too many got him wrong.

The facts of his life were there, but on what he stood for—and what finally his life should model for us—the reviews were all too Galbraith-as-synecdoche, the man who bespoke another era, an earlier time that he and we had long outlived. In committing this error, all sides, even with their differences, seemed guilty: the liberals wanly elegiac at the loss, the conservatives smugly self-satisfied that the things Galbraith stood for had gone to their reward long before he did, the undecided and uncommitted nervously praiseful of his wit. All, in other words, played their parts as expected.

Except Galbraith.

To the very end, he was a figure of exceptional and independent mind and spirit, a skeptic always of power and privilege. He was a man who used both when given to him, but for the benefit of us all. He took sides, but he was never a partisan in the mean, small way of cable talk-show hosts or certain politicians today. He could befriend men as different as Henry Kissinger and Hubert Humphrey, Bill Buckley and Bill Clinton, and then, just as easily as he befriended them, deftly chastise them when they chose to do what he knew was wrong.

He sought to serve great leaders, and was often to others himself one—as a careful insider when the opportunity to do something large presented itself, or as a courageous outsider when the times called for that.

Like his hero Keynes, he endured most economists only because he loved economics and wanted us all to live secure lives, not lives made more insecure by more bad economic theories. He loved literature and art and conversation, wrote successful (though not memorable) novels, collected Moghul paintings of great delicacy and beauty. He made friends easily, and kept most of them for a lifetime.

He drank single-malt, neat.

He knew when to fight and what he would fight for, but hated war and the men who willingly encouraged it. He'd walked through death camps in Germany and the ashen streets of Hiroshima in 1945, and always spoke with vehemence thereafter against the military-industrial nexus that reigned in Cold War America. (At its height, the line he wrote for John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address was this: "We must never negotiate out of fear, but we must never fear to negotiate.") He loved the company of beautiful, intelligent women.

Shortly before his own death, Kennedy observed, honoring the poet Robert Frost, that

The men who create power make an indispensable contribution to the nation's greatness, but the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable ... for they determine whether we use power or power uses us.

Galbraith lived what he wanted us to learn.

Not long after he died, a plain coffin was brought in to carry his 6-foot-8-inch body away. Fresh from some mortuary storeroom, it carried an inventory tag with these words: "John Kenneth Galbraith. Oversized."

They got him just right. **TAP**

Richard Parker is the author of John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics. An Oxford-trained economist, Parker teaches at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

MEMORIAL

A memorial service for John Kenneth Galbraith was scheduled for May 31 at 2 p.m. at Harvard University Memorial Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138; Grace Cottage Foundation, P.O. Box 1, Townshend, VT 05353; or Economists for Peace and Security, P.O. Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504, www.epsusa.org.

Burnt Offering

How a 2003 secret overture from Tehran might have led to a deal on Iran's nuclear capacity—if the Bush administration hadn't rebuffed it.

BY GARETH PORTER

IRAN'S "MAD MULLAHS" WANT NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO destroy Israel and can only be stopped by the threat or use of military force. That's what the Bush administration would have the public believe, as it pushes toward a confrontation with Iran over that country's nuclear program. A key link in the argument is that Tehran has shown no interest in negotiating over the nuclear issue. As State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters last January, the administration didn't then see "anything that indicates the Iranians are willing to engage in a serious diplomatic process" on the nuclear issue.

In the woeful history of falsehoods about the targets of potential U.S. force, however, this one is particularly egregious. In the spring of 2003, the Islamic Republic of Iran not only proposed to negotiate with the Bush administration on its nuclear program and its support for terrorists but also offered concrete concessions that went very far toward meeting U.S. concerns.

The story of that Iranian negotiating proposal and the U.S. failure to respond, which has never been covered by major U.S. media, reveals the underlying pragmatism driving Iranian policy toward an agreement with the United States. It also reveals a fierce struggle between realists who wanted to engage Iran diplomatically and the inner circle of advisers who were determined to avoid it. The stubborn rejection by President Bush and his neo-conservative advisers of normal diplomatic practice in their dealings with Iran, detailed for the first time here, raises grave questions about the Bush administration's real motives as it maneuvers through the present crisis over Iran's nuclear program.

THE POST-9-11 OPPORTUNITY WITH IRAN

Almost from the beginning of Bush's presidency, two groups in the administration were waging an intense struggle over Iran, while the U.S. government went month after month without an official policy. Those officials who wanted to try diplomacy had a champion in Undersecretary of State Richard Armitage, a close confidante of Secretary of State Colin Powell. Armitage had lived in Tehran for several months in 1975 as part of a Pentagon team trying to restrain the shah's arms purchases, and he was "very interested" in Iran, according to Powell's chief of staff,

Lawrence Wilkerson. One of the reasons Armitage brought Middle East specialist Richard Haass into the department as head of the Office of Policy Planning, Wilkerson says, was to work on a new policy toward Iran.

Haass, for four years the senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs on the staff of the National Security Council under the first President Bush, began in the summer of 2001 to explore the possibilities for engaging Iran diplomatically, first through the easing of economic sanctions imposed in 1996 under the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act. But by the time the State Department was focused on the problem, it was already too late: The bill re-imposing those sanctions had been introduced in the House on January 3, 2001, even before Bush's inauguration, and had no fewer than 250 co-sponsors. A source who worked on the issue at the time says the American Israel Public Affairs Committee had been focusing on the legislation for months. The bill passed overwhelmingly in July 2001.

The September 11 attacks created an entirely new strategic context for engagement with Iran. The evening of 9-11, Flynt Leverett, a career CIA analyst who was then at the State Department as a counter-terrorism expert, and a small group of officials met with Powell. It was the beginning of work on a diplomatic strategy in support of the U.S. effort to destroy the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the al-Qaeda network it had harbored. The main aim was to gain the cooperation of states that were considered sponsors of terrorism.

"The United States was about to mount a global war on terrorism with complete legitimacy from the United Nations," recalls Leverett, "and these states didn't want to get on the downside of it." Within weeks, Iran, Syria, Libya, and Sudan all approached the United States through various channels to offer their help in the fight against al-Qaeda. "The Iranians said we don't like al-Qaeda any better than you, and we have assets in Afghanistan that could be useful," Leverett recalls.

It was the beginning of a period of extraordinary strategic cooperation between Iran and the United States. As America began preparing for the military operation in Afghanistan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Ryan Crocker held a series of secret meetings with Iranian officials in Geneva. In those



Obviously Four Believers: But would they have been in 2003, when their government wanted to cut a deal?

meetings, Iran offered search-and-rescue help, humanitarian assistance, and even advice on which targets to bomb in Afghanistan, according to one former administration official. The Iranians, who had been working for years with the main anti-Taliban coalition, the Northern Alliance, also advised the Americans about how to negotiate the major ethnic and political fault lines in the country.

The Iranian-U.S. strategic rapprochement continued to gain momentum in November and December 2001. In early December, at a conference in Bonn to set up a post-Taliban Afghan government, Iran pressed its allies in the Northern Alliance to limit their demands for ministerial seats and even made sure antiterrorism language was included in the agreement, according to U.S. Special Envoy James Dobbins. Leverett agrees. “The Bonn Conference would not have been successful without [Iran’s] cooperation,” he says. “They had real contacts with the players on the ground in Afghanistan, and they proposed to use that influence in continuing coordination with the United States.”

The Office of Policy Planning had written a paper in late November arguing that the United States had “a real opportunity” to work more closely with Iran on al-Qaeda. It proposed exchanges of information and coordinated border sweeps, requiring no more than sharing tactical intelligence on al-Qaeda with Iran, with the expectation that even more valuable intelligence would come from the Iranians. That proposal was supported by the CIA as well as from the White House coordinator on counterterrorism, Wayne Downing.

The strategy advocated by Haass and Leverett, with the encouragement of Armitage and Powell, was to use the new desire of states still listed as sponsors of terrorism—especially Iran and Syria—to cooperate with the United States to press for larger changes in policy. The idea, Leverett recalls, was to “have broader conversations with them about support for terrorist groups and say, ‘We will take you off the state-sponsors-of-terrorism list if you do the following.’”

With Iran, such discussions would also have to cover the country’s nuclear program. The Policy Planning staff had been putting together options that would revolve around different levels of incentives, ranging from modest benefits such as support for Iran’s membership in the World Trade Organization to a more comprehensive offer that would include security guarantees, according to a source familiar with the proposal. Wilkerson describes the resulting plan for a dialogue with Iran as having “quite a lot of detail.”

NEOCONSERVATIVES STRIKE BACK

The post-9-11 period was the most promising moment for a U.S. opening to Iran since the two countries cut their relations in 1979. But neoconservatives had no intention of letting the engagement initiative get off the ground, and they were well-positioned to ensure that it didn’t.

The main drama around Iran policy in late 2001 was played out in the White House, where the drafting of the State of the Union message was under way and where the neoconservatives held sway. The inclusion of Iran in the “axis of evil” was at first opposed by then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and her deputy, Stephen J. Hadley, because, as Hadley told journalist Bob Woodward, Iran, unlike Iraq or North Korea, had a “complicated political structure with a democratically elected president.” But Bush had already made up his mind; regime change was the goal.

A stronger, more self-confident national security adviser would have insisted that an ill-informed President consider the pros and cons of making such a far-reaching foreign-policy decision on the basis of a half-baked concept, and perhaps insist on intelligence advice on the matter. But Rice had already earned a reputation among national security officials for always staying in Bush’s good graces by taking whatever position she believed he would favor. “She would guess which way the President would

go and make sure that's where she came out," says Wilkerson, who watched her operate for four years. "She would be an advocate up to a point, but her advocacy would cease as soon as she sniffed the President's position."

Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld led the neoconservative push for regime change. But it was Douglas Feith, the abrasive and aggressively pro-Israel undersecretary of defense for policy, who was responsible for developing the details of the policy. Feith had two staff members, Larry Franklin and Harold Rhode, who spoke Farsi, and a third, William Luti, whom one former U.S. official recalls being "down-right irrational" on anything having to do with Iran. A former intelligence official who worked on the Middle East said, "I've had a couple of Israeli generals tell me off the record that they think Luti is insane."

In December 2001, Feith secretly dispatched Franklin and Rhode to Rome to meet with Manucher Ghorbanifar, the shady Iranian arms dealer in the Iran-Contra affair, and other Iranians. Administration officials later told Warren P. Strobel of the Knight Ridder media chain that they had learned that among those Iranians were representatives of the Mujahadeen e Khalq (MEK), a paramilitary organization Saddam had used for acts of terror against non-Sunni Iraqis and Iran.

In December, the question of policy toward the state sponsors of terrorism was taken up by the "deputies committee" made up of Hadley, who served as chairman, Armitage, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and a deputy to CIA Director George Tenet. The outcome was already foretold. "It was decided that to engage with these states was a concession to terrorism, a reward for bad behavior," Leverett recalls. In rules for dealing with Iran and Syria, referred to informally as the "Hadley Rules," the committee further decreed that there could be no sharing of intelligence information or any other cooperation on al-Qaeda, although the states in question could be asked to provide information or other cooperation unilaterally. The new rules put U.S. policy toward Iran in a straitjacket requiring that Iran could never be treated as a sovereign equal on any issue.

It was clear to State Department officials that no progress could be made toward engaging Iran without a formal Iran policy that would supersede the Hadley Rules. In early 2002, Leverett worked on a draft National Security Presidential Decision (NSPD) calling for diplomatic engagement. But Feith's staff came up with their own revised version of the draft, which turned into a policy of regime change, according to Leverett. The engagement group wanted Rice to hold an interagency meeting and force the issue, but she failed to do it, according to both Leverett and Wilkerson. The neoconservatives had prevailed through a costly policy default on Iran.

THE IRANIANS TRY FOR A GRAND BARGAIN

Bush's axis-of-evil speech was followed by public charges and press leaks from the administration that Iran was deliberately "harboring" al-Qaeda cadres who had fled from Afghanistan. In fact, the Iranians had made a serious effort to cooperate with Washington on al-Qaeda, according to Leverett. When the administration requested that the Iranian government send more guards to the

Afghan border to intercept al-Qaeda cadres, Iran did so. And when Washington asked Iran to look out for specific al-Qaeda leaders who had entered Iran, Iran put a hold on their visas.

The effect of the Bush administration's signals of hostility was to discredit the idea of cooperation with Washington as a means of obtaining U.S. concessions to Iranian interests. Reflecting the mood in Tehran, in May 2002, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei denounced the idea of negotiations with the United States as useless.

But Iranian calculations were dramatically altered by the impending U.S. attack on Iraq. In late 2002, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad met with Iranian officials in Geneva, asked for assistance for any American pilots downed in Iranian territory, and requested that Iran refrain from putting forces into Iraq. Journalist Afshin Molavi was told by Iranian sources that the Iranians agreed to both requests but insisted on a pledge by the United States not to attack Iran after it had removed Saddam, to which Khalilzad gave an equivocal answer.

Iranian national security officials were convinced that the Bush administration intended to move against their country once the United States had consolidated its position in Iraq. Trita Parsi, a specialist on Iranian foreign policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies who has had extensive interviews with officials of Iran's Supreme National Security Council as well as the Foreign Ministry, says, "They believed if they didn't do something, Iran would be next."

The only way Iranian officials could head off that threat was to offer Washington things it needed in return for things that Iran needed. In early 2003, the Iranians believed they had three new sources of bargaining leverage with Washington: the huge potential influence in a post-Saddam Iraq of the Iranian-trained and anti-American Iraqi Shiite political parties and military organizations in exile in Iran; the Bush administration's growing concern about Iran's nuclear program; and the U.S. desire to interrogate the al-Qaeda leaders Iran had captured in 2002.

As the United States was beginning its military occupation of Iraq in April, the Iranians were at work on a bold and concrete proposal to negotiate with the United States on the full range of issues in the U.S.-Iran conflict. Iran's then-ambassador to France, Sadegh Kharrazi, the nephew of then-Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, drafted the document, which was approved by the highest authorities in the Iranian system, including the Supreme National Security Council and Supreme Leader Khamenei himself, according to a letter accompanying the document from the Swiss ambassador in Tehran, Tim Guldemann, who served as an intermediary. Parsi says senior Iranian national security officials confirmed in interviews in August 2004 that Khamenei was "directly involved in the document."

The proposal, a copy of which is in the author's possession, offered a dramatic set of specific policy concessions Tehran was prepared to make in the framework of an overall bargain on its nuclear program, its policy toward Israel, and al-Qaeda. It also proposed the establishment of three parallel working groups to negotiate "road maps" on the three main areas of contention—weapons of mass destruction, "terrorism and regional security," and "economic cooperation."

The document was sent to Washington just in time for a meeting between Iran's U.N. Ambassador Javad Zarif and Khalilzad in Geneva on May 2, 2003. One copy arrived at the State Department by fax, and a second copy was taken to State in person by an American intermediary, according to a source who has discussed the letter with the intermediary.

The proposal offered “decisive action against any terrorists (above all, al-Qaeda) in Iranian territory” and “full cooperation and exchange of all relevant information.” It also indicated, however, that Iran wanted from the United States the “pursuit of anti-Iranian terrorists, above all MKO”—the Iranian acronym for the Mujihedeen e Khalq (MEK), which had fought alongside Iraqi troops in the war against Iran and was on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations—“and support for repatriation of their members in Iraq” as well as actions against the organization in the United States.

At the May 2 meeting in Geneva, a separate proposal involving exchange of information about al-Qaeda detainees and the MEK was spelled out by Ambassador Zarif. According to Leverett, Zarif informed Khalilzad that Iran would hand over the names of senior al-Qaeda cadres detained in Iran in return for the names of the MEK cadres and troops who had been captured by U.S. forces in Iraq.

To meet the U.S. concern about an Iranian nuclear weapons program, the document offered to accept much tighter controls by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in exchange for “full access to peaceful nuclear technology.” It proposed “full transparency for security [assurance] that there are no Iranian endeavors to develop or possess WMD” and “full cooperation with IAEA based on Iranian adoption of all relevant instruments (93+2 and all further IAEA protocols).” That was a reference to new IAEA protocols that would guarantee the IAEA access to any facility, whether declared or undeclared, on short notice—something Iran had been urged to adopt but was resisting in the hope of getting something in return. The adoption of those protocols would have made it significantly more difficult for Iran to carry on a secret nuclear program without the risk of being caught.

The Iranian proposal also offered a sweeping reorientation of Iranian policy toward Israel. In the past, Iran had attacked those Arab governments that had supported the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and Tehran had supported armed groups that opposed it. But the document offered “acceptance of the Arab League Beirut declaration (Saudi initiative, two-states approach).” The March 2002 declaration had embraced the land-for-peace principle and a comprehensive peace with Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to 1967 lines. That position would have aligned Iran's policy with that of the moderate Arab regimes.

The document also offered a “stop of any material support to Palestinian opposition groups (Hamas, Jihad, etc.) from Iranian

territory” and “pressure on these organizations to stop violent actions against civilians within borders of 1967.” Finally it proposed “action on Hizbollah to become a mere political organization within Lebanon.” That package of proposals was a clear bid for removal of Iran from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The document appears to have assumed that the United States would be dependent on Iran's help in stabilizing Iraq. It offered “coordination of Iranian influence for activity supporting political stabilization and the establishment of democratic institutions and a nonreligious government.” In return, the Iranians wanted “democratic and fully representative government in Iraq” (meaning a government chosen by popular election, which would allow its Shiite allies to gain power) and “support for Iranian claims for Iraqi reparations,” referring to Iranian claims against Iraq for having started the Iran-Iraq War.

Finally, its aims included “respect for Iranian national interests in Iraq and religious links to Najaf/Karbal.” Those references



Those Two Again: Rummy and Cheney persuaded Bush not to negotiate.

suggested that Tehran wanted some formal acknowledgement of its legitimate interests in Iraq as next-door neighbor, and of the historically close relations between the Shiite clergy in Iran and in those Iraqi Shiite centers.

The list of Iranian aims also included an end to U.S. “hostile behavior and rectification of status of Iran in the U.S.,” including its removal from the “axis of evil” and the “terrorism list,” and an end to all economic sanctions against Iran. But it also asked for “[r]ecognition of Iran's legitimate security interests in the region with according [appropriate] defense capacity.” According to knowledgeable observers of Iranian policy making, the ambition to be recognized as a legitimate power in the Persian Gulf, with a seat at the table in any regional discussions, has been a major motivation for many years for the Iranian national security establishment to reach an agreement with the United States.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION BRUSH-OFF

Iran's historic proposal for a broad diplomatic agreement should have prompted high-level discussions over the details of an

American response. In fact, however, the issue was quickly closed to further discussion. Leverett believes the document was a “respectable effort” to provide a basis for negotiations. Yet he recalls that there was no interagency meeting to discuss it. “The State Department knew it had no chance at the interagency level of arguing the case for it successfully,” he says. “They weren’t going to waste Powell’s rapidly diminishing capital on something that unlikely.”

The outcome of discussion among the principals—Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Powell—was that State was instructed to ignore the proposal and to reprimand Guldemann for having passed it on. “It was literally a few days,” Leverett recalls, between the arrival of the Iranian proposal and the dispatch of the message of displeasure with the Swiss ambassador.

The offer of a narrower deal over al-Qaeda and the anti-Iranian terrorist group touched off a brief period of intensive maneuvering by both sides in the administration over U.S. policy toward the MEK. When the proposed al-Qaeda-MEK exchange of information was discussed at a White House meeting, proponents of regime change sought to differentiate MEK from al-Qaeda. Bush is said to have responded, “But we say there is

In a masterstroke, Rumsfeld and Cheney had shut down the only diplomatic avenue available for communicating with Iran and convinced Bush that Iran was on the same side as al-Qaeda.

THE NUCLEAR ISSUE GROWS

The neoconservatives had hopes of taking advantage of this break to advance the plan developed by Feith and his staff for regime change in Iran. It called for a covert operation in Iran using the MEK (reconstituted under a new name) for armed forays into Iran. But Bush seems to have balked at getting in bed with the MEK. Seeing an opening, Powell became personally involved in heading off the use of the MEK against Iran. Powell pursued the MEK issue with both Rice and Rumsfeld “on a number of occasions,” according to Wilkerson. When he learned that Rumsfeld had prevailed on the military in May to leave the MEK with most of its arms and to allow it to move freely in and out of its camp north of Baghdad, Powell wrote a stiff letter to Rumsfeld reminding him that the MEK were U.S. “captives, not allies.”

But the U.S. stance toward Iran was still stuck in an imperial mode of making unilateral demands on Tehran for further coop-

eration on al-Qaeda as a condition for further talks. In October 2003, Armitage said in congressional testimony that the United States would be open to a wide-ranging dialogue, but only after Iran had agreed to “turn over or share intelligence about all al-Qaeda members and leaders.” Meanwhile, the State Department cracked down on the MEK in the United States as a terrorist or-

ganization, but it could offer no information to Tehran on the MEK in return for such intelligence cooperation, as Iran had proposed. It was still constrained by the Hadley Rules from engaging in any reciprocity with Iran. And in the end, Rumsfeld and Cheney succeeded in getting the U.S. proconsul in Baghdad, Jerry Bremer, to countermand a decision by the heavily Shiite Iraqi Governing Council to repatriate the MEK to Iran.

By the second half of 2003, American Iran policy had already begun to shift toward the issue of nuclear weapons, on which the neoconservative John Bolton, then the undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, played the lead role. The policy was to put pressure on Iran to force it to completely give up its nuclear fuel cycle by getting the IAEA to vote to take Iran’s case to the U.N. Security Council.

Iran began negotiating on the nuclear issue with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany in September 2003 to avoid the Security Council and the prospect of sanctions, and possibly even U.S. warplanes. But Mohammed El Baradei, the chief of the IAEA, who had been meeting with Iranian officials about their nuclear program for months, knew that the essence of the problem was Iran’s unfulfilled need to negotiate a settlement with the United States. According to an account in *Newsday* earlier this year, El Baradei met with Powell in January 2004 to appeal to him for serious U.S. involvement in the negotiations, warning that negotiations were the only way the issue could be resolved. But Powell wouldn’t respond.

In a masterstroke, Rumsfeld and Cheney shut down the only diplomatic avenue open to Iran and convinced Bush that Iran was on al-Qaeda’s side.

no such thing as a good terrorist,” according to Leverett.

Although Bush did not approve an al-Qaeda-MEK deal, he did approve the disarming of the MEK who had surrendered to U.S. troops in Iraq, as the State Department requested, and allowed State to continue the talks in Geneva.

But on May 12, 2003, a terrorist bombing in Riyadh killed eight Americans and 26 Saudis. Rumsfeld and Feith seized the occasion to regain the initiative on Iran. Three days later, Rumsfeld declared, “We know there are senior al-Qaeda in Iran ... presumably not an ungoverned area.” The following day someone obviously reflecting Rumsfeld’s views gave David Martin of CBS News an exclusive story. “U.S. officials say they have evidence the bombings in Saudi Arabia and other attacks still in the works were planned and directed by senior al-Qaeda operatives who have found safe haven in Iran,” Martin reported.

But in fact U.S. intelligence had no evidence that the Iranian government was intentionally allowing al-Qaeda to remain on Iranian soil. Contrary to Rumsfeld’s disingenuous statement, U.S. intelligence did not conclude that the government knew where the al-Qaeda members from Afghanistan were located in Iran. “The Iran experts agreed that, even if al-Qaeda had come in and out of Iran, it didn’t mean the Iranian government was complicit,” recalls Wilkerson. “There were parts of Iran where the government would not know what was going on.”

Nevertheless, within a few days, Rumsfeld and Cheney had persuaded Bush to cancel the May 21 meeting with Iranian officials.

IRAN'S CONTINUING QUEST FOR NEGOTIATIONS

Three years after Iran's 2003 negotiating initiative, the conflict over Iran's nuclear program is still being played out in the shadow of the U.S. refusal to respond to Iranian national security officials. After the negotiations with the three European states failed to provide security commitments, Iran said it was no longer bound by its voluntary suspension of enrichment-related activities, which it had agreed to in conjunction with the negotiations.

When the IAEA voted in February to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council due to concerns over its nuclear program, Iran responded by resuming uranium enrichment and, in April, announced progress in enrichment—all in defiance of U.S. military threats. But analysts familiar with Iranian thinking believe that the enrichment is not for the purpose of acquiring nuclear weapons but to force the United States to negotiate a settlement with Iran. Najmeh Bozorgmehr, an Iranian journalist who has covered Iran policy for several years, says Iranian leaders are now convinced that they had to show the United States “we can give you a hard time” to induce the administration to negotiate. Bozorgmehr says the enrichment is “producing facts on the ground” that Iran hopes will lead to negotiations. Trita Parsi says senior national security officials he interviewed in 2004 indicated that the rejection of Iran's 2003 proposals had tilted the internal debate toward that view. “If the United States had engaged Iran in 2003,” Parsi says, “Iran would not be enriching now.”

Iran is still after a settlement of the nuclear issue in the framework of a broader agreement with the United States such as Iran proposed in 2003. A new diplomatic campaign for that objective began in earnest on March 6, when Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said, “If America abandons its threats and creates a positive atmosphere in which it does not seek to influence the process of negotiations by imposing preconditions, then there will be no impediment to negotiations.” In April 24 press conference remarks, even the ultraconservative Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is hardly an enthusiast of negotiations with the United States, expressed a willingness to talk under certain unidentified conditions. On April 30, spokesman Asefi said Iran would negotiate on “large-scale enrichment” and that a Russian proposal aimed at breaking the international deadlock by enriching the fuel in Russia and shipping it to Iran is “still on the table.”

The Bush administration has thus far resisted any suggestion of negotiations with Iran. But it is coming under increasing pressure from its European allies and from the leading senators on the Foreign Relations Committee to alter that dangerous attitude. Congress and the media should start to examine and discuss the real reasons for this stubborn rejection of diplomacy, which is rooted in the administration's aggressive political-military aims toward Iran and the broader Middle East. **TAP**

Gareth Porter, a historian and journalist, writes regularly on U.S. policy in Iran and Iraq for *Inter Press Service*. His most recent book is *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (University of California Press, 2005).

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The Commissar's in Town

Very little happens at State regarding the Middle East without the knowledge and approval of Cheney—not Dick, but Liz, his powerful, secretive daughter.

BY ROBERT DREYFUSS

AT THE VERY HEART OF U.S. MIDDLE EAST policy, from the war in Iraq to pressure for regime change in Iran and Syria to the spread of free-market democracy in the region, sits the 39-year-old daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney. Elizabeth “Liz” Cheney, appointed to her post in February 2005, has a tongue-twisting title: principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs and coordinator for broader Middle East and North Africa initiatives. By all accounts, it is an enormously powerful post, and one for which she is uniquely unqualified.

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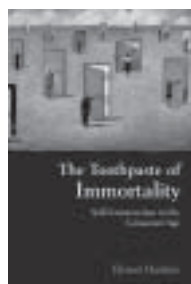


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George H. Quester

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During the past 15 months, Elizabeth Cheney has met with and bolstered a gaggle of Syrian exiles, often in tandem with John Hannah and David Wurmser, top officials in the Office of the Vice President (OVP); has pressed hard for money to accelerate the administration's ever more overt campaign for forced regime change in both Damascus and Teheran; and has overseen an increasingly discredited push for American-inspired democratic reform from Morocco to Iran. With the unspoken support of her father, Cheney has kept a hawk's eye on Iraq policy within the department, intimidating opponents of the neoconservative axis within the administration. And, less visibly, according to former officials who've worked with her, she has made her influence felt in choosing officials, selecting (or blocking) the appointment of ambassadors and other foreign service officers, and weighing in on other bureaucratic battles at the department.

Now, according to the *Financial Times* of London, Cheney is coordinating the work of a new entity called the Iran-Syria Operations Group. The unit was established "to plot a more aggressive democracy promotion strategy for those two 'rogue' states," reported the *Times*. In February, the State Department announced that Cheney would oversee a \$5 million program to "accelerate the work of reformers in Syria," providing grants of up to \$1 million each to Syrian dissidents. And in the current fiscal year, she will oversee a similar, \$7 million regime-change grant program for Iran, though funding for that effort is expected to grow to at least \$85 million soon, to include both a propaganda program and support to Iranian opposition groups.

"She came in knowing very little about the Middle East," says Marina S. Ottaway, senior associate and co-director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who has worked with Liz Cheney on democratic reform issues. "She had a mandate to do democracy promotion, but she had very little familiarity with the subject. ... They deliberately picked a person who was not a Middle East specialist, so that the conventional wisdom, well, let me rephrase, so that real, actual knowledge of the issues in the region wouldn't interfere with policy."

Liz Cheney catapulted into her current job after a rather undistinguished career that leapfrogged from public to private life and back again. In her early 20s, she did a stint at the State Department while her father was secretary of defense in the first Bush administration, and then headed to law school at the University of Chicago and worked for Armitage Associates, a firm run by Richard Armitage. As an attorney, she worked for the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank, and served briefly as a U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) officer in Hungary and Poland. Her Middle East experience was, well, limited.

Asked about Liz's familiarity with the Middle East, a former staffer at the Middle East Institute, a Washington, D.C., think tank, says that she dabbled in the Institute's Arabic language classes. "And she'd come to our annual conference," she said. That's it.

That was, however, apparently enough to get her named deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) in 2002.



Dizzy Miss Lizzie: Liz Cheney with her father (left) in 2004; and with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abu el-Gheit last summer

IN AN ADMINISTRATION IN WHICH POLICY TOWARD IRAQ and the Middle East was mostly guided by know-nothings and the inexperienced, perhaps it isn't surprising that Liz Cheney got herself named to a top position at Near Eastern Affairs. How, exactly, she ended up at NEA in the first place is something of a mystery, although no one interviewed doubted that it was at the behest of the vice president. One former deputy assistant secretary at NEA said that the bureau was offered the choice of either Liz Cheney or Danielle Pletka, a neoconservative hardliner who is the vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Pletka, a sharp-elbowed insider who helped write the Iraq Liberation Act in the 1990s, was reportedly seen by Secretary of State Colin Powell and NEA as the greater of two evils, and so Cheney got the job.

During the preparations for the Iraq War, Cheney had a back seat at NEA, with a portfolio covering Middle East economic issues, including oil. However, according to insiders, her real importance was to serve as an ace-in-the-hole at the State Department for the vice president's office. Her presence had a sobering effect on many of the department's Arabists, most of whom were known as opponents of the war and were considered suspect by neoconservatives. "All during that year, you had the vice president's daughter sitting there at State Department meetings," says Chas Freeman, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Says another former U.S. ambassador to several key Middle East countries otherwise known for his tough-minded ability to stand up to Arab strongmen: "I would find it confining, if not intimidating."

In 2003, she left the State Department to take a role in the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign and to give birth to her fourth child. (Her husband is Philip Perry, general counsel for the Department of Homeland Security.) But after the election, in 2005, she was back—this time with an important, and telling, promotion to the far more senior post of principal deputy assistant secretary, making her the No. 2 official on Middle East policy. Known by its acronym, PDAS (pronounced "pee-dass"), it is a bureaucratic post known for its power inside NEA. It was an appointment that certainly got the attention of the State Department's Middle East hands.

"There has always been a political appointee in every bureau at State," says Ambassador Philip Wilcox, a former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs. But usually the political



appointee, who serves as a sort of commissar, would be placed in a low rank within NEA, he says. "The idea that the PDAS would be that political appointee is just unprecedented, since she serves as the alter ego of the assistant secretary."

Wayne White, who served as deputy director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and who headed that unit's Iraq team during the war, left the State Department in 2005. "The thing we all said among us, in chit chat, when she moved up to be PDAS after being the deputy assistant secretary, was, 'Ah, now we see the plan,'" he says. "First, she gets her training wheels as deputy assistant secretary ... where she'd get softer assignments, sort of training, which happens to people in that position who don't have a Middle East background, and she doesn't—and then boom! right up to PDAS ... She is in a position to stop anything from going forward—as in the form of a memo, a recommendation—that she pretty much wants."

In her job as PDAS, Cheney is responsible for nearly all of the management and administration of the bureau, says White. "In one way, the PDAS is like Stalin in the early 1920s communist party, controlling personnel, able to promote, not promote, put people in key positions. This is an extremely powerful position."

David Welch, the assistant secretary of state for NEA, is nominally Liz Cheney's boss. But her connection to her father, plus her pipelines directly up to more senior State Department officials such as Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, make it easy for her to eclipse Welch. (Like Armitage, who also served as a top State Department official for George W. Bush, Zoellick is a signatory to the statements of the Project for a New American Century in the 1990s, which charted the administration's bellicose

course.) “David Welch is in an impossible position on anything she takes an interest in,” says a former top NEA official. “And she takes an interest in the big issues—Iraq, Iran, and so on. They have to be very careful, if they want to do anything that protects the national interest, because it has to coincide with what Liz Cheney thinks is in the national interest.” One of the few reporters in Washington to look into Liz Cheney’s role at the State Department, Timothy Phelps of Long Island’s *Newsday*, reported in April that she operates what is essentially a “shadow Middle East policy” against the more mainstream policy promoted by Welch, typical of the neoconservative versus realist divisions that have plagued the Bush administration since 2001.

Cheney has not shied away from throwing her weight around. During her frequent trips to the Middle East, she often operates independently of the department and of the U.S. ambassador in whatever country she is visiting. She has been known to insist on seeing a head of state without inviting the American ambassador to accompany her, in violation of protocol, often threatening the ambassador with the power of her contacts. On at

Says one corporate lobbyist: “It’s not just that she is imperious in dealing with our ambassadors. She’s got her own foreign policy, her own agenda.”

least one occasion, however, an ambassador called her bluff. “Liz Cheney comes out to this country, and she tells the ambassador—and she doesn’t outrank him—she tells the ambassador, ‘You’re not going in the meeting with me,’” recalls Larry Wilkerson, who served as Colin Powell’s assistant during his tenure as secretary of state. “And he says, ‘I’m sorry, I’m going in the meeting with you. You’re not going into a meeting with the head of state without me.’ And she says, ‘Nope—would you like a telephone call?’” In this case, says Wilkerson, the department’s bosses backed up their ambassador, who accompanied a chastened Cheney into the meeting. But that has not always been the case. “It’s not just that she is imperious in dealing with our ambassadors,” notes a corporate lobbyist who is deeply involved in Middle East policy. “She’s got her own foreign policy, her own agenda, and so of course she wouldn’t want the ambassador to know what she is talking about when she meets a head of state.”

SOON AFTER HER RETURN TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN March 2005, Liz Cheney made news when she convened a controversial meeting with a handful of exiled Syrian activists to talk about regime change in Damascus. Leading the pack at the time was Farid al-Ghadry, a paradoxically pro-Israeli Syrian who’s maintained ties to neoconservatives in Washington and who is close to Wurmser and his wife, Meyrav Wurmser, the director of Middle East affairs for the Hudson Institute. According to Arab sources, it was Meyrav Wurmser who helped to arrange al-Ghadry’s tête-à-tête with Liz Cheney, Hannah, and other Bush administration officials.

Al-Ghadry, a Virginia businessman who founded the Reform Party of Syria, is widely seen in Arab circles as a lightweight with no credibility inside Syria. Mourhaf Jouejati, a professor of political science at George Washington University and an expert on Syrian politics, calls al-Ghadry a “mini-me of Ahmed Chalabi,” adding that Liz Cheney, Hannah, and the Wurmseres “are the backbone for Farid Ghadry’s movement. The question is, are they just seeking leverage with Syria, or is it a serious option? If it is the latter, I would be scared, because that means that they don’t know what they are doing.” One of the Syrians who took part in the meeting with Cheney and Hannah is Najib Ghadbian, an activist, author, and professor at the University of Arkansas. “Ghadry doesn’t have much following inside Syria,” Ghadbian admits. “Why are they behind him so much? Maybe they are following the Iraqi model, but al-Ghadry doesn’t even have the clout of Chalabi.” Perhaps another reason that al-Ghadry had the inside track with Cheney, Hannah, and Wurmser is that he is a member of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who has spoken at meetings of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a think tank whose board of advisers includes Richard Perle, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and James Woolsey. (Since the meeting with Cheney a year ago, al-Ghadry has lost favor even in Syrian exile circles. A new group, calling itself the Syrian National Council, has emerged, elbowing al-Ghadry out of a leading role.)

Since then, and with the emergence of the reported Iran-Syria Operations Group, Liz Cheney has taken a leading role in the Bush administration’s campaign for regime change in both countries. While continuing to press Syria, the State Department has launched a campaign against Iran, separately from any military confrontation being worked on at the Pentagon. “It looks so déjà vu,” says Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, who compares the effort to America’s actions before war in Iraq. In addition to pressing the United Nations to impose tough new sanctions against Iran, Liz Cheney is coordinating an effort to rouse Iranian exiles to spark revolution inside the country. Besides seeking \$75 million in additional funds for anti-Tehran activities, the State Department has created a brand new Office of Iranian Affairs, which sounds suspiciously like the Defense Department’s Office of Special Plans that was set up to coordinate pre-war planning for Iraq. And, according to a recent State Department planning document, the United States is setting up anti-Iranian intelligence and mobilization centers in Dubai, Istanbul, Ankara, Adana, Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, London, and Baku to work with “Iranian expatriate communities.”

Having set into motion much of this activity, Liz Cheney’s role in once again up in the air. Many at the State Department may breathe a sigh of relief this summer, when Cheney will once again likely take a leave of absence for the birth of her fifth child, expected in July. Even so, she will remain part of her father’s inner circle. And as the United States lurches toward a confrontation with Iran—October Surprise anyone?—Liz and Dick will be hand in hand. **TAP**

Robert Dreyfuss is a Prospect senior correspondent.

Who's Your Daddy Party?

Fifty-plus war veterans, retired Navy men, a sheriff, a prosecutor, and a former star quarterback all running for Congress—as **Democrats?!?** Wasn't the **gop** supposed to be the Testosterone Party? How our most macho president brought his party's hetero-hegemony to an end.

BY FRANCIS WILKINSON

“ Terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength; they are invited by the perception of weakness. ”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH HAS MADE THAT STATEMENT MANY TIMES. So has Vice President Dick Cheney. And Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Multiple principals endlessly repeating themselves—that's the mark of a premium White House talking point. Or in this case, a kind of gospel—poll-tested, market-driven, swing-voter-approved, and sanctioned by Cardinal Rove himself.

Like its religious counterpart, political liturgy does not reward literal interpretation. The “weakness” that invites our destruction is not a measurable, structural weakness of nations. It is more insidious than that. It is the weakness of men. Certain men of uncertain will. Unmanly men. Men who lack the grit and determination to command other men to expend their grit and determination in battle. Girly men. Men who snuggle before the domestic hearth of the Mommy Party. Men who fuss and fret over Mother Nature (when what she really needs is a good drilling). Men who wish to restrain the natural urges of natural men, to smother initiative and stifle competition beneath the suffocating pleats and ruffles of the Nanny State. Men who are effete. Men who cut and run. Men without guns or guts or glory. Men whose weakness abases and undermines the rugged individualism and frontier can-do that made the United States Numero Uno.

We have met the enemy. And he *adores* Judy Garland.

No matter what ideological hue he projects, whether conservatism, corporatism, idealistic imperialism, or his studied tracings of Ronald Reagan's rugged sentimentalism, Bush has made manliness the centerpiece of his persona and his politics. Bush's flight-deck performance aboard the *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln*—“Mission Accomplished”—long ago became Esperanto for “hubris.” But as psychologist Stephen J. Ducat noted in his provocative book on masculine anxiety, *The Wimp Factor*, the event

SCULPTED ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ LOMAX



began as a ballsy celebration, first and foremost, of Bush's manhood. Observing the President's flight suit, which expressly accentuated his crotch, G. Gordon Liddy, the right's uncensored id, noted: "It makes the best of his manly characteristic."

We are in our sixth year of government by gonads. Through conscious, concerted, disciplined, and relentless effort, Bush and his party have succeeded in cowering critics and defeating Democrats by advancing images of, and insinuations about, manliness in the public sphere. In the Republican political schemata, this is a man's world. Men have made it dangerous. And only men—real Republican men—can make it safe again.

The Reagan administration introduced the nation to War Wimps, that bellicose band of conservatives who so relish American wars (provided other Americans fight them). In prevailing against their liberal critics, the WW's learned a valuable lesson: The public is more impressed by a politician's aggressiveness in the present than by any failures to launch in the past. As a result, even the most unlikely tough guys began kicking up sand at the beach. Orrin Hatch, perhaps the Senate's most fastidious prigg, with a proclivity for French cuffs and pink ties, declared Democrats "the party of homosexuals." Senator Trent Lott, who volunteered for cheerleading duty at Ole Miss but cartwheeled away when Vietnam beckoned, proclaimed of Republicans, "I think that we are the party of Mars."

With the rise of Bush, Cheney, and Rove (WW's all), the bully boy behavior reached new heights. The one resounding message Republicans have deployed—over and over and over—since September 11 is that Democrats are weak. And we all know terror attacks are invited by the perception of weakness. What's more, virtually every subsidiary Republican attack—from gay marriage (Homosexual Party) to taxes (Nanny Party) to abortion (whatever you say, dear)—has exploited traditional gender stereotypes and reinforced the theme of Democratic wimpiness.

For three straight elections, from 2000 through 2004, Republicans have outmaneuvered the Democrats. Al Gore was dismissed as a hectoring schoolmarm, John Kerry as a flaky croissant, a kept man, a tin soldier. In between, Bush made no bones about the price of Democratic pusillanimity: Under its brief Democratic majority, he said, the U.S. Senate was simply "not interested in the security of the American people." And with another Election Day approaching, and their party depleted of both issues and credibility, the Republicans will no doubt seek to emasculate the opposition once again.

But the testosterone is no longer flowing like \$75 crude. Multiple mission failures have exposed Republican talking points as so much bluster. To underscore the farce, the gods of metaphor illustrated the tragic potential of power placed in irresponsible hands; after his beer-and-hunting nightmare in Texas, Vice-President Bottom awoke with an ass's head on his shoulders.

Now, rising out of the broken-back shamble of Republican machismo, is a veritable platoon of Democratic men. They have exceptionally macho profiles and an appetite for power. They are politically diverse but united in their contempt for the bully in the pulpit. They are fed up with schoolyard put-downs.

They are disgusted by incompetence and callousness. And they are running for Congress.

The president was right after all:

The perception of weakness has indeed invited attack. Democrats are this year making their strongest run at power since 1992. The quality of the candidates is particularly striking. At last count, there were more than 50 war veterans running for Congress as Democrats. In addition, a former pro quarterback, Heath Shuler, is competing as a Democrat for a North Carolina congressional seat the party has coveted for years. A Democratic sheriff is running in Indiana, a district attorney in upstate New York, and a blunt-spoken "cowboy" entrepreneur in Florida.

For a party that has launched unprecedented numbers of women into Congress in recent years, this latest crop of candidates has a remarkably musky bouquet. Perhaps it's the combat boots. Patrick Murphy, running against a freshman Republican in a district outside Philadelphia, is one of an endless stream of ambitious attorneys eager to become pols. But when Murphy, 32, introduces himself to voters

in the district, he distinguishes himself by mentioning his tour of duty in Baghdad with the 82nd Airborne.

Joe Sestak, a Naval Academy graduate and retired vice admiral, is threatening Republican incumbent Curt Weldon in another Pennsylvania district. Sestak, who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, calls the Iraq War a "tragic misadventure" and, like Murphy, supports a staged withdrawal of U.S. troops.

One of the most intriguing Democratic campaigns this year belongs to James Webb, who is running for Senate in Virginia. Webb is a Vietnam veteran and former secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration. Until recently, he had seemed comfortably at home in the Republican Party. If Webb survives his primary, he will run against Republican Senator George Allen, namesake son of the famous NFL football coach



You Are What You Drive: Talismanic Ford pickup and owner

and a man who, between cowboy boots, chewing tobacco, and the noose that once hung in his office, has worked overtime grooming a distinctly Republican style of toughness. Webb, however, appears to be spoiling for a fight above all with the commander in chief. An accomplished novelist and essayist, he has blasted Bush in print for dishonoring the service of veterans (John McCain, John Kerry, Jack Murtha, Max Cleland) who disagree with him. But seething between the lines—and sometimes breaking into the text—is Webb’s palpable contempt for grand strategists who “have never seen the inside of a military uniform.”

Many of these candidates—including Murphy, Sestak, and possibly even Webb—have a reasonable shot at victory if the gathering Democratic wave hits shore in November. The 15 seats Democrats need to take over the House of Representatives may be within reach. However, most members of the Democratic “Band of Brothers” will surely fail. Gerrymandered districts, a still-polarized electorate, and the challenger’s gauntlet of money and execution will in many cases be sufficient obstacles to victory. Nevertheless, these Democratic men, many of whom launched campaigns without having been recruited by party leaders, may also be signs of a larger cultural stirring.

It wasn’t long ago that members of the Dixie Chicks were isolated in their criticism of Bush’s war. Now, in the he-man precincts of twang, the boys are making noise, too. Merle Haggard is growling about a nation gone to hell in a handbasket. Cranky old Neil Young is hankering for impeachment. And Tim McGraw says

Bush’s failure in New Orleans “erases everything that’s great about our country.” McGraw has even floated the notion of a future run for office as a Tennessee stud—and Democrat.

There are limits to the political appeal of macho resumes, of course. In recent years, Democrats have been undone on the issue of national security despite impressive martial credentials. The GOP template for defeating John Kerry was established in the 2002 Senate race in Georgia. Country club Republican and draft avoider Saxby Chambliss defeated Senator Max Cleland by accusing Cleland, who lost three limbs in Vietnam, of being weak on national security. Nearly four years later, Democrats are still livid. “Having the [war] credential didn’t keep the Republicans from trashing Max Cleland in one of the most egregious, disgusting things they’ve ever done,” a senior party operative says. “They’ll go just as low this year.”

As we begin our election-year descent, perhaps it behooves us to consider the value of challenging, rather than perpetuating, ancient archetypes of manhood and demeaning stereotypes of weakness. If Democratic values mean anything, then surely they mean to make gay bashing, misogyny, and the like the political road less traveled, and human dignity a more common cause. The 21st century may well dictate such a course, even if Democrats fail to chart it. Indicators ranging from education and income to reproductive autonomy suggest the new century will be marked and quite likely defined by an ascendance of feminine power. (The political arithmetic is particularly persuasive: Just two decades ago, there was a lone female



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in the U.S. Senate. Today, there are 14, complemented by eight women governors.)

Yet for richer and for poorer, manliness remains a cornerstone of the arena. The question right now concerns what kind of manliness evidenced by what kind of men. The administration's manifest impotence in Iraq, New Orleans, and—increasingly—Washington has restricted its political options. But it has also damaged its exclusive claims to masculine prowess. Because they loved it too much and exploited it too nakedly in the overwrought hours since 9-11, Bush and the Republicans have discredited their brand of muscle politics. But for five years they deployed it with vindictive and disciplined aggression. They seemed to have fun while it lasted.

Like our own era, the turn of the previous century was a time of feminine assertion and masculine anxiety. Women were creating new roles in public life, even threatening to invade the voting booth.

Men, confronted by feminine encroachment on one front, suffered an erosion of autonomy on the other. The American frontier was officially closed in 1890, restricting the free range of land as well as the imagination. At the same time, men were moving by the millions from field to factory and office, surrender-

ing their independence and capacity for self-definition. forces were soon engulfed in a bloody, extended fight against homegrown insurgents. More than 2,000 U.S. soldiers were killed and hundreds of thousands of Filipinos slaughtered. An occupying army far from home, U.S. troops were frightened and enraged by their inability to tell friend from foe. They soon resorted to unconventional measures. The American public had been encouraged to view the war as a character-building exercise for its virile young men. It was shocked to discover that some U.S. soldiers were systematically torturing the prisoners under their control.

When Karl Rove cited McKinley as his inspiration for Bush's presidency, the Philippine-American War wasn't what he had in mind. Instead, Rove, who focused on McKinley in graduate school, noted that the 25th president had ushered in a Republican reign of 36 years, interrupted only by the two terms of Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Rove envisioned Bush at the head of a similar juggernaut. He found a historical parallel that wasn't there. And he overlooked one that was.

In high school in Utah, Rove was a self-described "nerd" who carried a briefcase to class. In the cafeteria, he was not seated at the right hand of the quarterback. Though Rove found no release for his aggression on the athletic field, he managed to channel it into another type of contest. Politics, said one of Rove's college professors, was Karl's "varsity sport."

The practice of national politics in the age of the 24-hour news cycle is so all-consuming that excellence fairly demands obsession.

It blots out other, healthier claims

on personal time. Rove has "hundreds" of friends, his wife Darby has said, but "no one he's intimate with." When relationships are transactional, intimacy is a hindrance; it undermines control. And Rove is very much in control. Consider this first-person vignette by reporter Ron Suskind in the January 2003 issue of *Esquire*:

Inside, Rove was talking to an aide about some political stratagem in some state that had gone awry and a political operative who had displeased him. I paid it no mind and reviewed a jotted list of questions I hoped to ask. But after a moment, it was like ignoring a tornado flinging parked cars. "We will fuck him. Do you hear me? We will fuck him. We will ruin him. Like no one has ever fucked him."

Anal rape is always an arresting metaphor. For all I know, Rove deploys it hourly for its salutary effect on subordinates, colleagues, and rivals. But on that particular day, he made sure that a well-connected journalist heard every word. Rove was going to fuck somebody, ruin them, fuck them like they'd never been fucked. And he wanted every asshole in Washington to know about it.

Time will tell whether Rove has understood the politics of realignment. But there is no question he has mastered the dark arts of intimidation, emasculation, and other forms of political aggression. And in Bush, Rove found a candidate who combines an instinct for iconic masculine poses with an aggressive streak that complements Rove's own.

When Karl Rove cited McKinley as his inspiration for Bush's presidency, he found a historical parallel that wasn't there and overlooked the one that was.

ing their independence and capacity for self-definition.

In response, a conscious effort was launched to re-masculate the great American indoors. Men's social groups—Elks, Knights, Masons—spread across the land, while jingoists trumpeted manly virtues as the basis of progress. It wasn't long before even the Paschal Lamb was pumping iron. "Lord save us," evangelist Billy Sunday pleaded, "from off-handed, flabby-cheeked, brittle-boned, weak-kneed, thin-skinned, pliable, plastic, spineless, effeminate, sissified, three-carat Christianity."

Riding this uneasy masculine tide, William McKinley, in his 1896 campaign literature, assured voters that the 53-year-old Republican was "one of the best examples of courageous, persevering, vigorous manhood that the nation has ever produced."

After the *U.S.S. Maine* sank in Havana Harbor in 1898, President McKinley was called upon to prove it. When at first he refrained from retaliation against Spain, McKinley was subjected to the jingoes' feminizing derision. Editorials cited a "great need of a man in the White House" and "manly and resolute" responses to Spain's treachery. Teddy Roosevelt, eager to make manliness the fulcrum of any drama, complained, "McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate éclair."

McKinley eventually demonstrated his backbone, bending to the jingoes' demands for war. Though the proximate cause of the conflict resided in Cuba, the American defeat of Spain led McKinley to annex the Philippines. The White House had hoped U.S. troops would be greeted in Manila as liberators. Instead, U.S.

When Bush parades to a podium, his arms cantilevered to the side to make room for imaginary mass and muscle, he looks like a freshman swimming upstream against the hormonal currents of a high-school hallway. It's not enough for Bush to impress upon you the fact that he is leader of the world's sole superpower. He also wants you to think he can beat you up.

However, Bush is also a complicated case. Eager to telegraph his masculinity through walk and talk and posture, he nonetheless appears personally unthreatened by women, blacks, and gays, an immunity that distinguishes him from his culturally reactive, ever-anxious political base. He allowed himself to be tutored by a younger black woman—not in the domestic rigmarole of the welfare state but in the manly crucible of foreign affairs, where presidencies are made or broken. (He then let it be known he had been tutored by her and eventually named her secretary of state.) Of equal note, Bush's forays into homophobia are cynically electoral, not emotionally authentic; as soon as the polls close, the antigay claptrap is put in storage until it's needed to rouse the base next season. The biennial denigration of a few million Americans is nothing personal—just the price of power.

Much has been made of Bush's Oedipal drama over Iraq. But the father's legacy is evident everywhere—certainly in W's equation of masculine aggression with political survival. Before he became leader of the free world, Bush Sr. was a sports star, a war hero, a successful wildcatter in the rough and tumble drilling fields of west Texas. Yet he was tarred as a "wimp," depicted in political cartoons as an old biddy or, in Doonesbury, as so light in his loafers that he constituted no more than an asterisk.

If the father was too wimpy to master the arena, what of the son? Cheerleader, draft evader, oil business failure, he fell short of the father on nearly every masculine measure. For George W. Bush, no amount of aggression or masculine posing could be too much. To prevail in a brutal world of men like Karl Rove, W. was going to have to be one hell of a hard-ass.

The father's demise surely shaped the son's rise. But the raw material was there to be molded. Bush's college yearbook contains a photograph of him playing rugby. His left arm is wrapped around the neck of an opposing player, who is carrying the ball. His right hand is in a fist and appears to be sucker-punching his opponent in the face. The caption reads: "George Bush delivers illegal, but gratifying right hook to opposing ball carrier." A portrait of the cheap-shot artist as a young man.

The people who set Bush's reflexive right hook in motion are not female, black, or gay.

They are men much like Bush—but with one powerful difference. A *USA Today* story in the wake of 9-11 reported that Bush had told others in the White House he believed "confronting the enemy" was a chance "for him and his fellow baby boomers" to display the same valor their fathers had shown in World War II. If true, this desire must be powerfully reinforced by his knowledge that, given a previous opportunity to prove his manly bona fides, he had demurred. Meanwhile, the very existence of "fellow baby boomers" who don't share his

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need for vindication, who rose to the challenge of his generation while he was holed up in Texas and Alabama doing God knows what, is a perpetual affront to Bush. It's hardly a wonder why men with combat medals pinned to broad chests might get under this President's skin.

John McCain, John Kerry, Jack Murtha. Each was the subject of all-out, no holds barred, viciously personal attacks by the Bush camp. Though their politics could not be more different one from another, each of the three had to be assaulted, destroyed, because each in his way is a genuine article that exposes Bush's copy.

Murtha, who's been there, anguishes over the caskets and mangled bodies that Bush can't even bring himself to acknowledge. Kerry spartanly shouldered the noblesse oblige that Bush shirked. McCain proved in Hanoi that beneath a party animal exterior much like young Bush's, he was not only a tough son of a bitch but an honorable one. Today, McCain, like Bush, walks with his arms awkwardly extended from his sides. But he does so not as a self-conscious pose but because his tortured muscles won't permit a more natural resolution.

Voters have frequently voiced appreciation that they "know where Bush stands" even if they don't agree with him. They're right, of course. Except in a few notably catastrophic instances, in which Bush plays the part of a lost man who refuses to ask for directions, he deserves credit for staking out terrain and manfully holding to it. But unlike his opposites, Bush also frequently employs aggression without honor, and his drive for dominance has been too little tempered by leadership.

The attacks of 9-11 remain the defining context of the Bush White House not because the President rose to the challenge of a new threat and a changing era. At best, it *seems* he will leave office with the national interest strategically impaired. But Bush, Rove, and Cheney understood, as they so often repeat, that 9-11 "changed everything." Because they recognized fear in the eyes of the people. And they exploited it without compunction. They surely think better of themselves than that. But that's the kind of men they are.

After the two erect, once amusingly phallic, towers collapsed, they left behind a burning, violated hole. We'd been fucked all right, like we'd never been fucked. And due to the déjà-vu-all-over-again phenomenon that is cable television, a technology thankfully absent during Pearl Harbor and Britain's torching of the White House, we were scared like we'd never been scared.

Anyone who has witnessed political focus groups in recent years has had a front-row seat to the primal effects of terrorism on the American psyche. During the 2004 campaign, says a senior Democratic adviser, "married women, regardless of where they lived, were sure their local community was going to be hit."

That's an exaggeration, of course. But a slight one. Bush's machismo appealed not only to anxious men with a primal urge to strike back at the bad guys, but to women—especially women with children—whose new world could never be made safe enough. In the presidential election that succeeded 9-11, Bush won 5.7 million more votes from women than he had in the election that preceded it.

From 9-11 on, Bush ran a protection racket. He would do whatever it took to keep the neighborhood safe. He would stiff the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions. He would strike preemptively. He would lock people up without charge. He would swagger and tell the bad guys, "You can run but you cannot hide," and swagger and call the Democrats "weak." He would promise repeatedly to "protect the American people." And on Tuesdays in November, he would come around to collect.

But the protection racket came undone when Katrina blew the roof off New Orleans and ripped the façade off the White House. Everyone now knows that George W. Bush is incapable of protecting us. We're like the settlers in a frontier town who discover that the strong, silent sheriff in the jailhouse window is a department store mannequin.

Into this void marches the Democrats' "Band of Brothers."

It falls on them to resuscitate a more honorable, less bullying style of masculine politics—and to make it a winner. To be honest, they don't look much different from Al Gore, Max Cleland, or John Kerry—three capital losers. They are battle-hardened but essentially decent. Skeptical of the boasts of war, but mindful of the present dangers. Many are political newcomers, sniffing opportunity in the shifting winds, subject equally to the neophyte's fatal mistake and to the beginner's blind luck.

It's not really the men who have changed but the times. 9-11 changed everything. Then Katrina changed the contours of 9-11.

After watching Cleland and Kerry get pummeled, our Democratic war veterans are primed to counterpunch. Patrick Murphy, the son of a Philly cop, is acutely aware of the recent history of Republican attacks. He pays conspicuous tribute to Murtha on his campaign Web site. He hopes to have Cleland into the district to campaign. He says he is prepared for hits below the belt. "If they try to dishonor my military service," he says, "I'm going to hit right back."

Go get 'em boys. I hope every one of those guys—even those in races that are positively unwinnable—wrestles his Republican opponent to the ground and roars, asserting his Democratic manhood. We need the catharsis.

But after having wallowed in our fear these last five years, maybe what we need next are leaders who will raise us above it. The one man who taught us better than any other to conquer fear was no Governor Terminator. His muscles were unimpressive. He had no physical swagger to him at all. His military experience was a desk job. He wore no cowboy gear. He smoked cigarettes not like a Marlboro Man but filtered through a slender, feminine holder that could have been a prop from the *Follies Bergere*. He didn't promise to protect us. He made us believe we could protect ourselves—from the violence of fascism and the vicissitudes of capitalism alike. And he handed us the tools to do the job. We built the better part of the American century on the back of an aristocratic, polio-addled cripple. Now *that* was a man. **TAP**

Francis Wilkinson is a communications consultant and speechwriter in Nyack, New York.



Pastor Strangelove

Texan John Hagee may not have his “perfect red heifer” yet. But he does have a huge following, the ear of the White House—and a theory that an invasion of Iran was foretold (we’re not making this up) in the Book of Esther.

BY SARAH POSNER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
McDAVID HENDERSON

ON PURIM, THE JEWISH HOLIDAY THAT CELEBRATES the day Queen Esther saved the Jews from annihilation, Trinity Broadcasting Network's flagship talk show, *Praise the Lord*, featured an appearance by Rabbi Daniel Lapin. A politically conservative Orthodox rabbi, Lapin is best known for crusading with the Christian right against "anti-religion bigotry" and, more recently, for his close association with the convicted super-lobbyist Jack Abramoff. But he was not invited to a nationwide telecast to discuss such topics as the trumped-up war against religion or the better nature of his fallen friend. He had been asked to explain the significance of Purim to Christians, and particularly how the Old Testament's Book of Esther "serves as a roadmap to reality," which pinpoints where the next world "hot spot" will be.

That soon-to-be-flaming location is where the Book of Esther was set: namely Persia, or in modern parlance, Iran.

Seated beside Lapin in the ornately gilded Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) studio was Pastor John Hagee, the author of an incendiary new book purporting to show that the Bible predicts a military confrontation with Iran. By then, Hagee's book, *Jerusalem Countdown*, had sold nearly 500,000 copies. It had occupied the No. 1 position on the Wal-Mart inspirational best-seller list, showed up on Wal-Mart's list of top 10 best sellers for seven weeks, and made the *USA Today* top 50 best-seller list for six weeks.

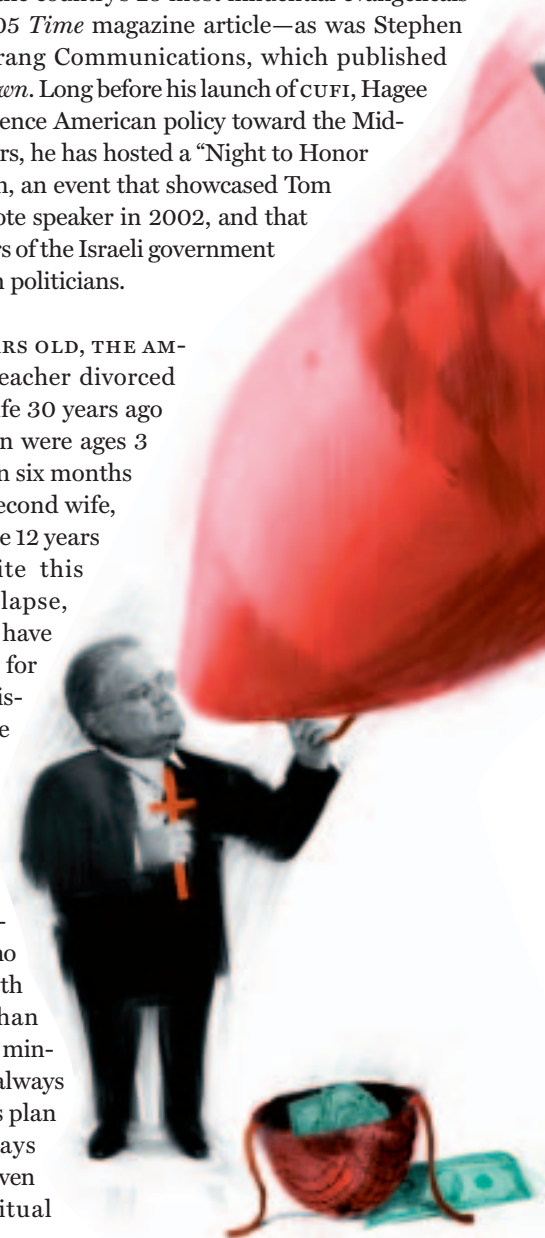
Hagee, who serves as head pastor of the 18,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, hosts his own television program that is seen twice a day on TBN. He argues that the United States must join Israel in a pre-emptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West. Shortly after the release of his book last January, he launched Christians United for Israel (CUFI), a lobbying organization intended, he says, to be a Christian version of the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee. With CUFI, which Hagee has said will cause a "political earthquake," the televangelist aims to put the political organizing muscle of the conservative evangelical movement behind his grand plan for a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation, and Second Coming of Christ.

While Washington insiders wonder and worry whether President Bush *really* is bent on a military strike against Iran, Hagee already has spent months mobilizing the shock troops in support of another war. As diplomats, experts, and pundits debate how many years Iran will need to develop a viable nuclear weapon, Hagee says the mullahs already possess the means to destroy Israel and America. And although Bush insists that diplomatic options are still on the table, Hagee has dismissed pussyfooting diplomacy and primed his followers for a conflagration.

Indeed, Hagee wields "a very large megaphone" that reaches "a very large group of people," said Rabbi James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee, who has studied the Christian right for 30 years. With CUFI, the Texas pastor has exponentially expanded the reach of his megaphone beyond his television audience. Thanks to the viral marketing made possible by the hundreds of evangelical leaders who have signed on to his new organization, his warmongering has rippled through megachurches across America for months.

Hagee calls pastors "the spiritual generals of America," an appropriate phrase given his reliance on them to rally their troops behind his message. The CUFI board of directors includes the Reverend Jerry Falwell, former Republican presidential candidate and religious right activist Gary Bauer, and George Morrison, pastor to the 8,000-member Faith Bible Chapel in Arvada, Colorado, and chairman of the board of Promise Keepers. Rod Parsley, the Ohio televangelist who is rapidly becoming a major political figure in the Christian right, signed on as a regional director. Among CUFI's other supporters are nationally syndicated Christian right talk show host Janet Parshall, who serves on its board of advisers, and Ron Wexler, an Orthodox Jew and president of the theocratic Ten Commandments Commission, which has the backing of nearly every prominent conservative evangelical in the country. Many popular TBN televangelists, among them the controversial faith healer Benny Hinn and the best-selling author of self-improvement books, Joyce Meyer, have also offered their support. Meyer was named one of the country's 25 most influential evangelicals in an oft-cited 2005 *Time* magazine article—as was Stephen Strang, CEO of Strang Communications, which published *Jerusalem Countdown*. Long before his launch of CUFI, Hagee had sought to influence American policy toward the Middle East. For 25 years, he has hosted a "Night to Honor Israel" at his church, an event that showcased Tom DeLay as the keynote speaker in 2002, and that has attracted leaders of the Israeli government as well as American politicians.

NOW 66 YEARS OLD, THE AMBITIOUS preacher divorced his first wife 30 years ago when their children were ages 3 and 6, and less than six months later married his second wife, who happened to be 12 years his junior. Despite this apparent moral lapse, other evangelicals have long looked to him for guidance. The Christian pollster George Barna recently reported that Hagee is ranked in the top 10 spokesmen for Christianity among other Pentecostals. Morrison, who has been friends with Hagee for more than 20 years and whose ministry has likewise "always seen Israel in God's plan for the future," says that Hagee "has proven himself as a spiritual



leader in the country. And he has the platform, his TV ministry ... he has the great respect of a lot of other leaders, so certainly, he's in that position ... [of] spiritual leadership and authority to lead the evangelical churches and help unite them." (Hagee himself, as well as Falwell and Bauer, declined to be interviewed for this article.)

David Brog, a former chief of staff to Senator Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania Republican, serves on CUFI's board of advisers. *Standing With Israel*, his book urging Jews to embrace the support of evangelical Christians, has just been published by Strang Communications. Brog believes that CUFI "can have an enormous influence. It can really create a player where there isn't currently one." As to whether Hagee has the organizational skills to pull off such a project, Brog added that the pastor is a "great administrator" and a "great leader," and was able to build his church and TV ministry because "he's a good businessman, he's a good organizer."

But Hagee the businessman—along with friends like Hinn, Meyer, Parsley, and other TBN televangelists, including the network's top executives, Paul and Jan Crouch—has come

ent watchdog of TBN and its televangelists. He says that the ministries increase donations through "sophisticated direct-mail campaigns," using mailing lists compiled as a result of viewers calling the "prayer lines" advertised on television programs. He regards the abuse of the prayer lines to get callers' names and addresses as "one of the many scandals of the religious world of television."

ALTHOUGH MANY CHRISTIANS CONSIDER THE MONEY-centered word of faith theology to be a form of heresy, the Republican Party has embraced TBN's audience as a valuable constituency. Rabbi Lapin, who himself has met personally with President Bush, told the *Prospect* that Hagee "without question, yes, absolutely" has the ear of the White House. But he declined to identify any officials by name, claiming "there's a lot of sensitivity in government circles about the so-called religious right." TBN has made much of its own Republican connections, touting network founder Paul Crouch's relationship with John Ashcroft (they attended the same church as children)—and the Republicans have returned the compliment.

In his 1999 campaign memoir, Bush recalls feeling "spellbound"

For Hagee's new project—agitating for war with Iran—his influence in Washington is less important than his influence over his audience.

under fire for excessive compensation derived from his nonprofit ministries.

According to his organization's tax returns, Hagee has earned more than \$1 million annually since 1999 in salary and deferred compensation from his nonprofit Global Evangelism Television and Cornerstone Church. In 2004, the *San Antonio News Express* reported that he was the highest-paid nonprofit executive in that city; his pay was nearly twice that of the next best-paid executive.

TBN is the largest Christian television network in the world, claiming to reach more than 92 million households in the United States alone, and since 9-11 has expanded its worldwide reach into Muslim countries, including Iran. Despite TBN's claim to represent the whole of Christianity, however, many Christians might not recognize their religion in TBN's "Word of Faith" programming. Word of Faith is a nondenominational Pentecostal movement, based on the power of the spoken word to claim one's spiritual and material desires and to purge devils from one's life. The movement's other central tenet, which critics say leads to the excessive compensation of its leaders, is the notion that "sowing a seed"—contributing to the ministry—will result in the donor's "harvest" of personal prosperity. Like the televangelists' individual ministries, TBN is operated by a nonprofit entity, so contributions are tax-deductible to the donor and tax free to the ministry. While TBN reaps more than \$100 million of revenue per year, mostly from viewer donations, Hagee's organization reports annual revenues of about \$15 million.

Olé Anthony is president of the Trinity Foundation, an independ-

by the preaching of Dallas-based TBN televangelist T.D. Jakes, whom he has since invited to participate in official White House events. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist has lauded TBN's efforts to expand its broadcasting into China. TBN's lawyer is Colby May, who also serves as counsel to the American Center for Law and Justice, a group founded by Pat Robertson, whose president Jay Sekulow, a converted Jew, advised Bush on his Supreme Court nominees. May also represents certain members of Congress on legislative initiatives and helped draft the Houses of Worship Free Speech Restoration Act, which, if passed, would lift the ban on electioneering from the pulpit. Its chief sponsor, Congressman Walter Jones, a North Carolina Republican, has appeared on *Praise the Lord* to promote the bill. Other guests on TBN programming have included Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina; Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican; Texas GOP co-chairman David Barton; and Oliver North, the radio host and Iran-Contra scandal celebrity.

Several years ago, after Crouch interviewed California Congressman Duke Cunningham, he wrote in TBN's newsletter: "What a soul-winner he is! Every time he shares his powerful testimony, lives are touched, and *our SOULS TOTAL soars!*" That was long before Cunningham pleaded guilty to bribery and conspiracy, and fell under suspicion of providing favors to a defense contractor who sent him prostitutes via limousine.

FOR HAGEE'S NEW PROJECT, HIS INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON is probably less important than his influence over his audience. With the clout of his listeners, he can serve Bush administration hawks by firing up grass-roots support for a military strike against Iran. TBN has provided several opportunities for Hagee to promote his book on *Praise the Lord*, sev-

eral installments of his own program, and a two-day appearance on Benny Hinn's show. Through the marketing efforts of Strang Communications, which placed national radio advertising spots for *Jerusalem Countdown* on *The Sean Hannity Show*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and *Janet Parshall's America*, Hagee brought his Armageddon message to a wider conservative audience. His end-times theology is nothing new; countless numbers of self-proclaimed prophets of the end of the world have demanded attention since the beginning of time. The difference now is that TBN's relentless fund raising—along with advances in digital and satellite broadcasting technology—has permitted worldwide dissemination of his ominous predictions. Through TBN, other religious and conservative media, and the growing mega-churches, Hagee has turned his Bible-thumping not only into a multi-million dollar business, but into a pro-war movement as well.

While pundits and politicians in Washington debate the merits of confrontation with Tehran, Hagee and other evangelical leaders plan to activate hundreds of congregations across the country—many of which boast tens of thousands of members—to flood congressional inboxes with e-mails at the touch of a button. The message from the heartland, beyond the ken

HE SPEAKS SIMULTANEOUSLY TO TWO AUDIENCES about Iran's nuclear capabilities: one that fears a terrorist attack by Iran and another that embraces a biblically mandated apocalypse. To impress the fearful, he mimics Bush's deceptions about Iraq's capacity to attack the United States with weapons of mass destruction, Condoleezza Rice's warnings of mushroom clouds, and Dick Cheney's dissembling about an alliance between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Comparing Ahmadinejad to Hitler, Hagee argues that Iran's development of nuclear weapons must be stopped to protect America and Israel from a nuclear attack. Preying on legitimate worries about terrorism, and invoking 9-11, he vividly describes a supposed Iranian-led plan to simultaneously explode nuclear suitcase bombs in seven American cities, or to use an electromagnetic pulse device to create "an American Hiroshima."

When addressing audiences receptive to Scriptural prophecy, however, Hagee welcomes the coming confrontation. He argues that a strike against Iran will cause Arab nations to unite under Russia's leadership, as outlined in chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezekiel, leading to an "inferno [that] will explode across the Middle East, plunging the world toward Armageddon." During

In Hagee's telling, Israel has to strike at Iran's nuclear facilities; the strike will provoke Russia to respond; God will then wipe out most of the Russian army.

of elites who cannot quite imagine such a decision, will be to strike Iran before it is too late.

The pages of *Jerusalem Countdown* provide a peculiar mix of biblical prophecy, purported inside information from Israeli government officials, and a mixed-up, pared-down lesson in nuclear physics. "I wrote this book in April 2005, and when people read it, they will think I wrote it late last night after the Fox News report," says the author without a trace of irony. "It's that close to where we are and beyond." Oddly enough he predicted, allegedly relying on information from a "reliable" Israeli source, that Iran would have a nuclear weapon ready by April 2006—the month during which Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had enriched uranium, although apparently not nearly enough to make a bomb.

The particulars of Iran's nuclear program, however, do not seem to interest Hagee. In many of his appearances last winter, before the Iranian president's announcement, he glossed over the obstacles faced by Tehran in creating a viable nuclear weapon, arguing that "once you have enriched uranium, the genie is out of the bottle." (His command of politics in Islamic countries is similarly flawed; he repeatedly has called Iranian religious fundamentalists "Wahabbists," even though Wahabbism is a form of Sunni Islam, and the overwhelming majority of Iranians are Shiites.) Last March, he claimed that within a month, "Iran will have the nuclear—the enriched uranium to make the—have the nuclear capability to make a bomb, a suitcase bomb, a missile head, or anything they want to do with it." That statement is blatantly false, even according to the most pessimistic assessments of Iran's nuclear prowess, but Hagee's purpose is to frighten his listeners, not to inform them.

his appearance on Hinn's program at the end of last March, for example, the host enthused, "We are living in the last days. These are the most exciting days in church history," but then went on to add, "We are facing now [the] most dangerous moment for America." At one point, Hinn clapped his hands in delight and shouted, "Yes! Glory!" and then urged his viewers to donate money faster because he is running out of time to preach the gospel.

The rhetoric in Hagee's book, and his discussion of it in Christian media outlets, is absolutist. He speaks not only of good against evil, believer against nonbeliever, Judeo-Christian civilization against Islamic civilization, but of an American-Israeli alliance against the rest of the world. He plays on conservative disdain for anything European, while promoting the Bush unilateralist mentality that has had catastrophic results in Iraq. Naturally, he expresses contempt for the possibilities offered by diplomacy, calling the U.N. Security Council "a joke." Lapin says, "Pastor Hagee has a very realistic understanding of the United Nations ... and recognizes it as unlikely to be any more helpful in this looming tension than it has been in any other in the past." He paints Russia and China—two members of the Security Council resisting sanctions on Iran—as America's enemies, adding that Russia has helped Iran build long-range missiles that could reach New York City. (Those don't exist, either.)

In Hagee's telling, Israel has no choice but to strike at Iran's nuclear facilities, with or without America's help. The strike will provoke Russia—which wants Persian Gulf oil—to lead an army of Arab nations against Israel. Then God will wipe out all but one-sixth of the Russian-led army, as the world watches "with shock and awe," he says, lending either a divine quality to the Bush administration phrase or a Bush-like quality to God's wrath.

But Hagee doesn't stop there. He adds that Ezekiel predicts fire "upon those who live in security in the coastlands." From this sentence he concludes that there will be judgment upon all who stood by while the Russian-led force invaded Israel, and issues a stark warning to the United States to intervene: "Could it be that America, who refuses to defend Israel from the Russian invasion, will experience nuclear warfare on our east and west coasts?" He says yes, citing Genesis 12:3, in which God said to Israel: "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you."

To fill the power vacuum left by God's decimation of the Russian army, the Antichrist—identified by Hagee as the head of the European Union—will rule "a one-world government, a one-world currency and a one-world religion" for three and a half years. (He adds that "one need only be a casual observer of current events to see that all three of these things are coming into reality.") The "demonic world leader" will then be confronted by a false prophet, identified by Hagee as China, at Armageddon, the Mount of Megiddo in Israel. As they prepare for the final battle, Jesus will return on a white horse and cast both villains—and presumably any nonbelievers—into a "lake of fire burning with brimstone," thus marking the beginning of his millennial reign.

Now that's entertainment.

NOTWITHSTANDING HAGEE'S BIZARRE NARRATIVE OF the future, certain Jewish leaders value what they call his support for Israel, and appreciate his pledge not to actively proselytize Jews—a promise that sets him apart from other evangelicals. Rudin says that while he welcomes Hagee's support for Israel, he is uneasy "with what I feel is placing Jews and Judaism and the state of Israel into somebody else's divine play."

Hagee's divine play is based, in part, on Genesis 12:3. The same verse he uses to argue that America should unconditionally back Israel ("I will curse him who curses you."), he also cites to explain why Christians should love the Jewish people ("I will bless those who bless you."). During TBN's April "Praise-a-Thon," he invoked that verse for yet a third reason: to urge viewers to give their money to the network. Hagee told his viewers that "[g]iving is the only proof you have that the cancer of greed has not consumed your soul."

Besides his million-dollar compensation package, Hagee has a portfolio of other ventures, including a cattle ranch in south Texas that may have religious significance. Many evangelicals believe that the arrival of a "perfect red heifer" will signal the end times. In the Old Testament, burning a red heifer and sprinkling its ashes is described as a purification ritual for priests entering the temple. Ultra-orthodox Jews believe that the birth of a modern perfect red heifer will herald the arrival of the messiah, leading to a confrontation with Muslims over the Temple Mount, where Jews believe the Temple will be rebuilt. Some evangelicals likewise regard the red heifer as a harbinger of the ultimate showdown at the Temple Mount, which they believe will be the site of the Second Coming. And they believe that time is near.

To many other observers, the advent of the red heifer threatens to provoke a violent struggle for control of the Temple Mount, with worldwide repercussions. In the late 1990s, a group of unidentified Texas ranchers reportedly bred a perfect red heifer, which generated excitement in evangelical circles until

the animal sprouted some black hairs.

Six years ago, the John C. Hagee Royalty Trust paid more than \$5.5 million for a 7,600-acre ranch in Brackettville, Texas, where cattle are raised in a venture with the Texas Israel Agricultural Research Foundation, a nonprofit outfit operated by the pastor. (Another part of the property is a resort hunting facility, where guests paying up to \$250 for a night's stay can also land their planes at the ranch's private airstrip.) Last year, Hagee hired one of the top lobbyists in San Antonio, David Earl, to urge the state Legislature to exempt Hagee's foundation from water-use regulations. A spokeswoman for the bill's sponsor, Representative Frank Corte, whose district includes Hagee's church, said that he introduced it on behalf of a constituent, but added that she was not authorized to divulge the identity of that constituent. (The bill stalled in committee.) Earl said that Hagee wants to "share information" to "improve" the "production of livestock," particularly cattle, with an Israeli research project, but otherwise claimed to be unsure of the particulars. Dr. Scott Farhart, an obstetrician and trustee of the John C. Hagee Royalty Trust (and an elder at Hagee's church), did not respond to a request for comment, nor did the director of the ranch.

Esther is a favorite Old Testament figure of many evangelicals, a heroine who saved her people from a genocidal plot masterminded by the evil vizier Haman through her influence as the wife of the King of Persia. When she and her cousin Mordecai discussed whether she should risk death by intervening with the king, he encouraged her by suggesting that she had a divine role; perhaps she had come to the kingdom, he said, "for such a time as this." Evangelicals often invoke that phrase to elevate the relevance of modern-day figures. In 2004, Laura Bush repeated a story about a woman she met on the campaign trail who told her that the President "was born for such a time as this." In a recent message sent by e-mail to CUFI supporters, Hagee wrote that his organization "is exactly in the position of Esther. Israel is in a time of crisis. A 21st-century Hitler (the president of Iran) has put in place a plan to exterminate the Jews with nuclear warfare. If we remain completely silent at this time, God's punishment will come to us also."

Hagee doesn't fear a nuclear conflagration, but rather God's wrath for standing by as Iran executes its supposed plot to destroy Israel. A nuclear confrontation between America and Iran, which he says is foretold in the Book of Jeremiah, will not lead to the end of the world, but rather to God's renewal of the Garden of Eden. But he also reveals that he is ultimately less concerned with the fate of Israel or the Jews than with a theocratic Christian right agenda. When Jesus returns for his millennial reign, "the righteous are going to rule the nations of the earth ... When Jesus Christ comes back, he's not going to ask the ACLU if it's alright to pray, he's not going to ask the churches if they can ordain pedophile bishops and priests, he's not going to ask if it's all right to put the Ten Commandments in the statehouses, he's not going to endorse abortion, he's going to run the world by the word of God ... The world will never end. It's going to become a Garden of Eden, and Christ is going to rule it." **TAP**

Sarah Posner's profile of TBN televangelist Rod Parsley, "With God on His Side," appeared in the November 2005 issue of the Prospect.



The Doable Dozen

Whether or not the Democrats have a Big Idea, they—and some Republicans, too!—have a slew of very good small ones. Here's an unscientific list of 12 that don't ask for the moon but deserve to see the light of day.

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY PETER AND
MARIA HOEY

NATIONAL HEALTH CARE? DEMOLITION AND RECONSTRUCTION of the tax code? A comprehensive war on poverty? Well, maybe not—yet. But if the pollsters are right and Election 2006 proves to be a dark day for the right and a bright dawn for the left, there's plenty that a renewed progressive majority could enact immediately. Herewith are a dozen doable ideas, most of them languishing in Congress right now, many of them poised to tip onto the floor and into the lawbooks if a more liberal leadership began scheduling votes.

1

Watch Your Assets

The Problem: Income inequality

The Solution(s): Savings accounts at birth, mandated 401(k)s

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION IS DEAD, AND rightly so, but the general idea of using public policy to broaden the ownership of assets is still a good idea and, if done right, could help keep a lid on America's burgeoning income inequality and comically low savings rate. The ASPIRE Act, a modification of Tony Blair's "baby bonds" idea developed at the New America Foundation, focuses on the former issue. Somewhat different versions of the legislation have been introduced in the House and Senate, but both involve creating savings accounts in which every child will receive a \$500 starter deposit from the government, with children from below-median-income households eligible for additional government contributions of up to \$500. After turning 18, the account holder would be able to use the money to pay for college, buy a home, or invest in retirement funds. The Senate version of the bill, sponsored by Democrat Chuck Schumer of New York and Republican Jim DeMint of South Carolina, allows for additional contributions of up to \$1,000 per year and up to a \$500 match from the government, with the match phasing out at between 100 percent and 105 percent of median income. The House version, sponsored by Harold Ford, Patrick Kennedy, and Phil English is more generous, allowing \$2,000 in additional contributions with matches up to \$1,000 and a phaseout at between 100 and 200 percent of median income.

Both versions of the proposal are quite modest compared with the scale of asset inequality in America, which is much larger than our very large level of income inequality. Nonetheless, if the framework can be put in place, future Congresses might expand upon the baseline.

An even simpler idea, now being pushed by economists William Gale, Jonathan Gruber, and Peter Orszag under the auspices of the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project, takes aim at the national savings rate. Under current law, enrolling in an IRA or 401(k) plan requires positive action on an individual's part, action that people frequently don't take either out of inertia or because they find the choices confusing. Research indicates that forcing all firms to automatically enroll their employees in either a defined benefit plan, a 401(k), or an IRA and then letting individuals opt out if they don't want to save could dramatically increase participation rates. Gale, Gruber, and Orszag also propose tackling the inequality issue by changing the tax treatment of IRAs and 401(k)s that currently offer much larger benefits

to high earners than to working- and middle-class people. They propose replacing the tax preferences enjoyed by those accounts with a 30-percent match from the government for all qualified contributions to level the playing field. More ambitious variants of this idea have also been floated, featuring more generous matches for middle- and working-class people to create genuinely universal, mandatory portable 401(k)-type plans for all Americans.

— MATTHEW YGLESIAS

A \$500 starter deposit at birth for every child; after turning 18, the account holder can use the money to pay for college.

Witness Protection

The Problem: Indefinite detentions

The Solution: Amend an old law, newly applied

2

CHANCES ARE YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF A 1984 MATERIAL-WITNESS LAW that allows the government to lock up individuals who may know things concerning criminal proceedings but—for whatever reason—have refused to testify. The statute, which was originally passed to ensure that key witnesses provide information about pending criminal cases even when they don't feel like showing up in court to present what they know, has helped prosecutors in obtaining hard-to-get testimony in court cases over the years, but has never been considered controversial. That changed after September 11, 2001.

"I think someone in the Justice Department said, 'Hey, we can use this statute more aggressively,'" says a staff member who works for Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont. "Here's a statute that lets us arrest somebody and hold them indefinitely." The material-witness law, she says, was embraced as a "tool in terrorism investigation."

At that point, according to a June 2005 Human Rights Watch report, "Witness to Abuse," dozens of men, overwhelmingly Muslim, were held in detention in the United States without charges or accusations for months or, in at least one case, more than a year. Many of the people who were detained under this law watched their businesses go belly-up and their personal lives fall into shambles. Meanwhile, note Human Rights Watch researchers in the report, the Justice Department "tried to hide its use of the material-witness law, refusing to respond to congressional inquiries and keeping courtroom doors closed, records sealed, and material-witness cases off court dockets."

Leahy has come up with a way to fix the problem. He has proposed legislation that would help make sure the material-witness law is used only in the way that it is intended: "to obtain testimony," he said in a press statement on January 6, "and not to hold criminal suspects without charge when probable cause is lacking." The bill would impose time limits, as well as due-process standards, on the detention of material witnesses. "In the current bill, there's nothing on time limits," says the Senate staffer familiar with the legislation. "There's no end in sight." If the bill becomes law, there would be.

— TARA McKELVEY

3

For Richer, For Poorer

The Problem: Tax inequity

The Solution: A not-quite-flat flat tax

NATIONAL SECURITY, FAMILY VALUES, gay marriage, and the like have all, at different points, served as effective bludgeons for the right against progressive policy goals. But looking back over the period of conservative ascendancy as a whole, it's fair to say that the biggest club has been the one labeled "taxes." The Scripture of New Taxes is the one from which they all have read. I'll cut your taxes, George W. Bush said over and over and over in 2000; it's your money, not Washington's.

The promise, of course, carries an implicit allegation: that the Democrats will raise your taxes. It's proven an exceedingly tough charge to answer, and too many Democrats over the years have fallen into the trap of saying, "I'll cut your taxes, too!"

The better answer is that taxes need to be simpler and fairer. Which brings us to Oregon Senator Ron Wyden. His idea is simple enough that it can be communi-

cated to a child, and a far better progressive response than the usual one: Tax wages at the same rate you tax wealth.

Wyden likes to keep things simple. "People are desperate," he told the *Prospect* back in February, "for political figures, and especially for Democrats, to talk English—just plain English."

The plain-English version of Wyden's Fair Flat Tax Act is as follows. All income, earned (wages) and unearned (capital gains), will be taxed at the same rate—it's a travesty, Wyden says, "when Warren Buffet pays a lower tax rate than his receptionist." The current six individual rates will be folded into three—15 percent, 25 percent, and 35 percent. The new 1040 will shrink to 30 lines from its current 76. Tens of billions of dollars in tax breaks and loopholes will be eliminated. Lower- and middle-income taxpayers who do not itemize, and therefore get no credit for state and local taxes on their federal

returns, will now get a credit.

For selected taxpayers, the Wyden plan would look like this. A single filer with an \$18,000 income would go from paying \$1,004 to getting a \$162 refund. A head of household making \$47,000 would go from paying \$611 to getting \$2,549. A \$90,000-a-year married couple filing jointly would see their bill lowered by \$1,581. A single filer earning \$100,000 would see a \$1,591 reduction. Not until we get up into the rarefied air of \$275,000 earners does the tax bill go up, from \$55,510 to \$58,265.

Wyden's plan will run into political trouble even with senators from his own party who represent states where higher percentages of residents—wealthy people, retirees, or both—live off investment income (New York, California, Florida, Arizona). But the problem of moderate-income retirees seems like one that could be easily finessed. And the allure of a plain-English plan that helps working people should be apparent to the leaders of a party that has been losing tax arguments for 25 years.

— MICHAEL TOMASKY

Rush to Peace

The Problem: Global conflict resolution in crisis

The Solution: U.N. Emergency Peace Service

WHEN GLOBAL CRISES DEMAND A UNITED Nations peacekeeping force, it is up to the secretary general to cajole member countries to commit troops and funds. Kofi Annan likens this part of his job to a fire chief who must beg for trucks and volunteers to put out a fire. Inevitably, too few blue helmets are deployed months too late. By the time peacekeepers arrive, the conflict has spiraled out of control, countless lives have been lost, and the costs of maintaining security and rebuilding have increased manifold.

Enter the United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS), a rapid-response service designed to intervene in emerging crises. Legislation proposed by Maryland Democrat Albert Wynn, and co-sponsored by the soon-to-retire Republican Jim Leach of Iowa, supports creating a 10,000- to 15,000-strong multinational UNEPS force comprising military personnel, police officers, medical workers, engineers, and other legal and technical advisers. "Think of it as a global

4

911 service," says Don Kraus, executive vice president of Citizens for Global Solutions. Before natural disasters turn into large-scale humanitarian emergencies, and before local conflicts morph into civil or regional wars, this force would be tapped to prevent a crisis from escalating into catastrophe.

Wynn estimates that UNEPS would cost the U.N. \$2 billion to create and less than \$1 billion per year to sustain. For the international community, and especially for the United States, this would be a bargain: According to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, donor countries could have saved \$130 billion of the \$200 billion they spent on conflict management in the 1990s if they'd focused on conflict prevention rather than post-conflict reconstruction.

The ultimate purpose of this legislation is not to appropriate U.S. dollars to create the UNEPS. Rather, Wynn is promoting a concept that has been kicking around in academia and nongovernmental organizations for the past five years in hopes that a U.S. President (probably not this one) will take notice and push the idea at the United Nations.

— MARK GOLDBERG



police officers, medical workers, engineers, and other legal and technical advisers. "Think of it as a global

Patently Absurd

The Problem: Big PHarMa stifles consumers

The Solution: Reform the Patent and Trademark Office

5

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AMERICA is awash in patent applications—about 460,000 in 2005, way up from 178,083 in 1991. If this represented a genuine tripling of the pace of innovation, it would be a good thing.

Too bad. Mostly it represents not an innovation boom but a massive increase in the incentives being offered to apply for largely spurious patents. The main culprit was a 1991 reform depriving the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office of taxpayer support and instead forcing it to depend for its funding on user fees generated by its own activities. The idea wasn't obviously absurd—the logic was that users ought to pay for the privilege of registering and, besides, there were enough applications to make the office profitable—but the consequences have been perverse: Because each new application brings in a \$380 fee, the institution has a strong incentive to gin up business by signaling that it will take a friendly view of its “customers” applications. Worse, each new application that gets approved generates more than \$3,000 in annual maintenance fees.

Predictably, the result has been an ever-more-permissive attitude toward new applicants. A 2002 study from Cornerstone Research, a litigation-consulting firm, indicated that 86 percent of applications were approved in 2000, way up from 69 percent in 1984, when the number of requests was also much lower.

Even absent these incentives, examiners have little ability to do their jobs properly since Congress has started siphoning money from the patent fees away from the Patent Office to subsidize the rest of the government. Consequently, the ratio of applications to examiners has risen steadily even as the complexity of the work has increased. The job requires specialized skills, but salaries are low compared to the private sector. Thus, examiners frequently leave for more lucrative work after a few years on the job, denying the office experienced examiners, rendering young examiners disin-

clined to alienate potential employers, and arming applicants with detailed insider knowledge of the process' weaknesses.

The result has been an upshot in mischief. “Patent trolls” secure ownership over loosely conceived inventions they have no intention of marketing, hoping to score big down the road either in licensing fees or legal settlements when someone with a real product independently hits upon the same thing. Alternatively, companies assert that they've done research that never took place, or seek to patent ideas already in wide circulation.

The real upshot: The situation is a drag for consumers who wind up paying higher prices for products that, due to the government-sponsored patent monopoly, face no real market competition. It's also begun to aggravate significant elements of the business community. Other corporate actors,

however, and most crucially the pharmaceutical industry, like the status quo just fine (among other things, it helps them patent “new” versions of essentially the same drugs and stifle competition from cheaper generic alternatives) and so far have stifled various efforts at reform.

A bill from House Democrats Howard Berman and Rick Boucher would offer some reforms to the system—making it easier to challenge pending applications and wrongfully granted ones, and harder for patent trolls to obtain permanent injunctions, though to save money it fails to address the underlying patent-fee issue. Unfortunately, the prospects for even modest reform look bleak, no matter what happens in November. “The pharmaceutical companies buy everyone,” remarks Dan Ravicher from the Public Patent Foundation.

— MATTHEW YGLESIAS

6

The Drug War

The Problem: The Medicare drug benefit

The Solution: Let Medicare negotiate

THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT HAS BEEN A BOONDOGGLE. TO be fair, there was plenty of foreshadowing for this film: Watching George W. Bush and the pharmaceutical companies demand a massive new Medicare expansion to help seniors purchase drugs made for a fairly unsettling opening sequence. And when then-reigning Tom DeLay had to extend the vote an unprecedented three hours to wrench enough arms to pass the bill, the movie turned downright scary.

The problem with the benefit is that it farms out pharmaceutical negotiations to a variety of small insurers, explicitly barring the secretary of Health and Human Services from using Medicare's massive market share to bargain down prices on common drugs. This denies seniors the everyday low prices that have made Canadian reimportation such a hit, and forces them to pay 48 percent more than the Veterans Administration for the very same drugs. Given that Medicare dwarfs both Canada and the VA in market size, a bit of friendly negotiating should allow it to easily match their prices. After all, does Wal-Mart pay more than your local mom-and-pop?

So far as the pharmaceutical companies that compelled the bill were concerned, the high prices are a feature, not a bug. They had stuck their finger into the political winds and assumed, correctly, that a Democratic majority would soon pass a Medicare drug benefit with real bargaining power. So they had their buddy Bush head liberals off at the pass.

Luckily, it's not too late to offer a corrective. Nine senators, some Democrats, some Republicans, have already signed on to an effort that would empower Medicare to centralize its bargaining and extract discounts commensurate with its size. Trouble is, despite some bipartisan support, the Republican majority, bought and paid for by the pharmaceutical industry, is bottling the bill. Change regimes and it sees clear sailing, a journey that economist Dean Baker estimates could save the country between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. Now that would be a happy ending.

— EZRA KLEIN

Leaving a Legacy

The Problem: Too many to count

The Solution: Health care for hybrids

7

THREE PROBLEMS: GREENLAND IS MELTING AND THE SEAS ARE RISING; China is industrializing, driving oil and gas prices upward; General Motors is threatened with bankruptcy as its health-care costs go through the roof. To most, these may seem like discrete catastrophes, but Illinois Senator Barack Obama thinks they have a common solution.

Obama has come up with an audacious proposal that has won the backing of enviros and the United Auto Workers (UAW), and should win the support of both the cash-strapped auto industry and motorists suffering from sticker shock. One of the chief problems that General Motors, and, to a lesser degree, Ford and DaimlerChrysler, are facing are their legacy costs—in particular, paying for the health care of retirees and their spouses. At GM, the nearly half-million retirees and their spouses outnumber the current unionized workforce by roughly 4-to-1. These costs put the older auto companies at a competitive disadvantage with such newer transplant competitors as Toyota, and with automakers from countries where health-care costs are picked up by the government. The cost of a new GM car is on average \$1,500 higher due to the health-care obligations it has assumed.

So Obama has authored the Health Care for Hybrids Act, which mandates the government to pick up part of the tab for the auto companies' retiree health-care costs. In return, the companies would be required to invest most of their savings into more fuel-efficient cars. The UAW has embraced the idea, realizing that in the current market-über-alles zeitgeist, the kind of straight bailout offered to Chrysler in the 1970s, stands no chance of enactment. Clearly, enviros like the idea, as should consumers: With gas prices soaring, the appeal of hybrid cars grows greater every day (as the manufacturer of the Prius can attest). Obama's proposal may be characteristic of his work, finding support across class (and other) lines.

— HAROLD MEYERSON

Bad Credit

The Problem: Usurious credit-card rates

The Solution: Automatic linking to consumer accounts

8

WHEN JOHN EDWARDS BARNSTORMED ACROSS Iowa in the icy winter of 2004, he lit up rooms and brought audiences to their feet with an impassioned attack on a rarely mentioned entity whose reach extended into the pockets of nearly all his audience members: credit-card companies. At first blush it might have seemed like a small-bore consumer issue, but with the average household possessing 6.3 bank credit cards and 6.3 store credit cards and spending upwards of \$800 per year on penalties, interest, and fees, he was onto something.

Credit-card debt for middle-class families jumped 75 percent between 1998 and 2001, according to Demos, a public-policy research organization, helping fuel the explosion in bankruptcy filings in the early 2000s and, eventually, the bank-



ruptcy reform law tightening criteria for absolving individuals of the debts. Card penalty interest rates are now as high as 30 percent to 40 percent. Penalty fees made up 10.9 percent of lender revenues in 2004, up from 9 percent in 2002, and have continued to increase card-issuer profits. A person with \$3,000 in debt could, even if he never bought another thing on the card, rack up more than \$2,000 in penalties and fees in a single year, making getting out of that debt increasingly difficult. Bringing rates down to less usurious levels could put more money back in the pockets of working families than did the 2001 Bush tax rebate (which yielded up to \$300 per person).

Close to two years later, just such a plan has taken its place in the Center for American Progress' (CAP) "15 New Ideas" initiative, relaunched by Edwards' former policy director, Robert Gordon, now a senior vice president at the center; Derek Douglas, the center's associate director for economic policy; and Christian Weller, a senior economist at the center. The CAP team recommends making standard the linking of cards to automated payments from consumer accounts, as in Japan, so as to reduce the late-fee trap, since a substantial portion of the late fees consumers rack up are due to their personal disorganization, rather than inability to pay, coupled with company policies that slam the door on timely payments as early as 10 a.m. on due dates. The CAP team also recommends eliminating the now-standard practice of raising rates—without announcement and often retroactively, in a policy known as "universal default"—for individuals based on their use of unrelated cards.

In December 2005, Gordon and Douglas called for these and other changes in *The Washington Monthly*, arguing for a Credit Card Users' Bill of Rights. In the past, companies would not allow charges past a certain limit; today, they do so and charge stiff "over limit" fees of as much as \$35. Returning to the old system, or to a new opt-in system, would eliminate another way credit-card

companies now prey on consumers. The battle against abuse of credit-card practices, Gordon and Douglas wrote, would require neither "tax increases or government program expansions." It would simply require

that "progressives honor one of their simplest, noblest commandments: Stand up for regular people." Reforming the credit-card industry would combine the best of progressive populism with a truly private-sector solution to one major drag on the well-being of America's families.

— GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

9

High-Wire Act

The Problem: Wi-Fi shortage**The Solution:** Community broadband

MARCH 26, 2004. BOLDLY SEEKING TO BURNISH his pro-innovation credentials, President Bush declares his support for “universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007,” with “plenty of choices” for consumers. When he made that speech, America was ranked 10th in the world for broadband access. Now we’re 15th, with only 20 percent of the country enjoying high-speed Internet access in the home. We may have an ownership society, but without widespread access to the Net, we’re not going to have an innovative economy.

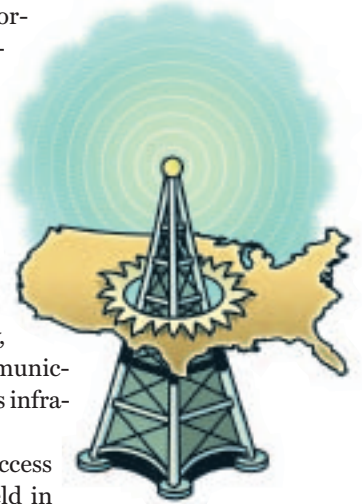
Happily, forward-looking cities across the nation have begun stepping into the void. In Corpus Christi, Texas, the government created a Wi-Fi network that would streamline its bureaucracies, obviating the need for human meter readers (gas meters would automatically report to central computers) and allowing members of the police force to access crucial data and images from their squad cars. Scottsburg, Indiana, population 6,000, was unable to attract any broadband providers to the town; with two businesses threatening to leave unless the technology situation changed, the government created its own network. In Philadelphia, where 90 percent of the affluent neighborhoods

but only 25 percent of low-income neighborhoods have access to broadband, construction is underway on a grid that would make the city one big, low-cost wireless hot spot.

All this was too much for the big telecoms, which spied a looming threat to their profit margins. If the cities were to provide cheap, widely available wireless, who would subscribe to their plans? So they sent their well-muscled lobbying organizations into statehouses across the country, rapidly winning passage of 14 bills barring municipalities from laying down their own wireless infrastructures. Charming.

But the frequencies used for wireless access are, in theory at least, public property, held in trust by the government, for the people. Someone must have clued in New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg to the arrangement, as he’s now pushing the Community Broadband Act, which would make it illegal for states to pass legislation barring municipalities from offering broadband access. Lest there be fears of public monopolies, the statute also declares that local governments can’t discriminate against private broadband companies and expel them from the market. The law, which has largely been ignored in the current Congress, would ensure the public has an array of wireless choices. Just as President Bush promised.

—EZRA KLEIN



The big telecoms are blocking cities from providing cheap wireless. Now, here's a plan to block them.

Sign on the Dotted Line

The Problem: Languishing unions**The Solution:** Import Canadian card check

10

AMERICAN UNIONS NEED A SHOT IN THE arm, and there's one waiting just north of the border. Card check, as the Canadian process of enrolling workers in unions is called, is a venerable idea whose time may come if the Democrats retake Congress.

In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) allowed workers to vote in federally supervised elections as to whether they wanted union representation, and millions voted yes. In the decades following World War II, as many as one-third of American workers were union members. Not coincidentally, this was the only period in American history when wages rose in tandem with productivity and when prosperity was broadly shared.

By the 1980s, however, many American employers realized that if they vio-

lated the NLRA's election rules—if they threatened employees who were active in union organizing, for instance—the penalties would be negligible. Retaliatory tactics eventually became routine. And even if unions actually won the election, employers could appeal through the legal system for years, and refuse to negotiate or sign a first contract. This is one reason why the rate of private-sector unionization over the past 50 years has dwindled from 35 percent to a measly 8 percent.

In time, many unions abandoned the NLRA process altogether, opting instead to compel the employer, through employee, community, and financial pressure, to allow the workers to join the union by the card-check process used in Canada. In card check, once the union submits

cards signed by a majority of the employees attesting to their desire to join the union, the company automatically recognizes the union as the bargaining agent.

Considerable union growth has occurred through this process, which is why congressional conservatives make periodic noises about outlawing it. A majority of congressional Democrats and a handful of Republicans, by contrast, have co-sponsored California Congressman George Miller's Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which would legalize card check, mandate mediation and binding arbitration if a first contract is not signed within 90 days of the union certification, and increase the penalties for employers who violate the nation's labor law. The EFCA is indispensable to rebuilding union strength and re-establishing mass prosperity; it should be a high priority for Democrats if they reclaim Congress.

— HAROLD MEYERSON

Lesson Plan

The Problem: Early education shortfall

The Solution: Universal pre-K

ON JUNE 6, CALIFORNIANS GET A CHANCE TO vote on Proposition 82, sponsored by film director Rob Reiner, which would amend the state constitution to guarantee all residents access to preschool education for their 4-year-old children, to be funded by a tax on the wealthiest 1 percent of state residents. Reiner's campaign has garnered a lot of attention this year—and not merely due to the controversy surrounding his

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campaign activities while serving as chairman of a state preschool commission. Proposition 82 marks the latest development in a movement for universal pre-K that has swept across states, including Georgia, Oklahoma, Florida, and New York, in the last decade. Comprehensive federal action to ensure universal pre-K access is the next step.

Decades' worth of empirical research has demonstrated the value of early childhood education in improving brain development and boosting behavioral and learning skills. Particularly for underprivileged populations, these effects are long-lasting: Studies of local programs have shown that children in poor neighborhoods who go through preschool do better in school, are less likely to repeat grades, and are less likely to end up in the justice system than those who don't. These programs are also all the more cost-effective because they prevent developmental problems associated with impoverished, high-stress environments rather than attempting to treat these problems after they appear. (A RAND study last year estimated that every public dollar spent on Reiner's California initiative would yield \$2.62 in later economic benefit.) And while the research certainly indicates that poor children receive the greatest benefits from access to good preschools, children across socio-economic groups benefit from early education. This, combined with the long-acknowledged pitfall facing targeted, means-tested social policies ("programs for the poor make for poor programs"), points to the logic of making pre-K access a universal rather than targeted policy.

What might comprehensive federal legislation ensuring universal preschool for all 4- and perhaps 3-year-olds look like? The Committee for Economic Development's 2002 proposal for a national universal pre-K policy called for a federal-to-state matching grant to underwrite state-based preschool systems and a national certification and standards process. Existing federal early childhood development programs—most notably Head Start—would be integrated into the new universal preschool system. (Early Head Start, which targets underprivileged 2- and 3-year-olds, could be expanded to augment the system.) Estimates for the total state and federal cost of such a system hover around \$35 billion. For progressives, the policy merits of universal preschool are obvious. The *politics* of it should be clear as well—not merely its appeal to overworked parents of young kids across the country, but also its potential to incorporate a new population of public-sector workers—unionized preschool teachers—into the progressive coalition.

—SAM ROSENFELD

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Matters of Class

Problem: Getting low-income students to college

Solution: Better taxes, loans

THE AVERAGE COLLEGE GRADUATE LIVES A HEALTHIER AND MORE prosperous life (and is more likely to vote) than the average nongraduate. But the high cost of college means that students from low-income families remain significantly less likely than their better-off peers to enroll, even after adjusting for academic ability. And instead of alleviating this discrepancy, current tax provisions basically reward middle- and higher-income families for sending kids to college.

It's time for some simple reforms that would make a big difference without a big price tag. A report from the Tax Policy Center (TPC), a joint venture of the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, puts forward just such a plan. In the proposal, two existing, nonrefundable tax credits with confusing eligibility regulations would be combined into one College Opportunity Tax Credit (COTC). The COTC would be refundable, allowing low-income families without tax liability to benefit. The report also suggests that a student's Pell Grant eligibility should be determined by tax-liability information already collected by the IRS, freeing applicants from the Kafkaesque complexity that is the current application process.

Simplification is crucial, as Harvard economists Susan Dynarski and Judith Scott-Clayton have shown. Walls of paperwork and regulations obscure aid and tax-benefit options, especially to students whose parents are not college-educated or whose primary language is not English, making the system even more regressive in effect than it is by design.

The TPC proposal would add an annual \$8.5 billion to the federal government's investments in student aid, with 63 percent of this increase flowing to households with less than \$20,000 in adjusted gross income. A significant part of the funding could be found by reforming an inefficient part of the current aid system: federal student loan programs. The government currently sponsors two competing programs, one through which students and parents borrow money directly from the government, and one where the government guarantees and subsidizes a loan from a commercial bank. For borrowers, these products are identical. For the government, however, the so-called guaranteed loans are more expensive. Analyzing President Bush's proposed budget for 2007, Kate Sabatini and John Irons of the Center for American Progress find that if the government stopped subsidizing commercial banks and provided all of next year's student loans directly, as much as \$5.6 billion could be saved. And that's after the hike in student loan interest rates that House Majority Leader John Boehner and his bank lobby friends pushed through Congress in February. Here's hoping the next Congress has done different math.

— ULRİK JØRSTAD GADE

Culture & Books

"Gordon and Trainor sometimes suggest that the Iraq War could have ended successfully if only Rumsfeld had not been in charge."

—PAGE 63



This Is America? Director Michael Winterbottom's depiction of life at Gitmo

FILM

ACCIDENTAL TOURISTS

The Road to Guantanamo, an unflinching dramatization of the case of Britain's Tipton Three, depicts degradation just for degradation's sake.

BY MARIE COCCO

HAD THEY BEEN BORN AND RAISED on this side of the Atlantic, they might have turned up as characters in a Bruce Springsteen ballad. They are the sort Springsteen tends to memorialize: Their roots are in a faded manufacturing neighborhood; their brushes with the law were petty scrapes that did not keep them from retaining their jobs as mail sorters or retail clerks, or from studying at a local university. All three have that knockabout way of going through life. It makes them neither aimless nor directed, but somehow it carries them along.

In the fall of 2001, the happenstance of life as they lived it took them from their

hardscrabble neighborhood of Tipton, England, (just outside Birmingham) to Pakistan. That is where one of the Tipton Three, Asif Iqbal, was to be wed in an arranged marriage. The other two, Ruhel Ahmed and Shafiq Rasul, were buddies who went to Pakistan for the wedding and for the sheer novelty of it.

"When he asked me to go to his wedding, I said, 'Why not?'" Ahmed says in the new British film, *The Road to Guantanamo*. "He's my friend and, also, it would be a great holiday."

But the lighthearted road trip to a friend's wedding would, within a month, become a grotesque nightmare. Bored

with waiting for the marriage ceremony, inspired in a mosque to go and aid poor Muslims in Afghanistan—and intrigued, as well, by tales about the huge loaves of naan, a local bread, they'd heard were customary in Afghanistan—the men who would become known as the Tipton Three crossed into Afghanistan just as the American military assault on the Taliban regime began.

It may be that the inspiring imam was recruiting terrorist fighters. But if so, it was an incompetent effort with regard to the Tipton Three. They saw fighting only in the forms of the bombs dropped by American forces and say they never even carried a weapon.

THE ROAD TO GUANTANAMO IS A dramatization of their story. Shot—with eerie authenticity—in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran and directed by Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross, the movie won the Silver Bear award for best direction at this year's Berlin In-

ternational Film Festival. Its American release is scheduled for selected theaters this month. The film is useful not so much for its presentation of new information—any American who has followed news accounts of this legal no man's land by now knows it is a place where seemingly endless (and mindless) interrogations yield little to nothing of substance.

But if it falls short on eye-popping revelations, the film unflinchingly depicts an enduring truth. Guantanamo is, at bottom, a place where the United States degrades people for the sake of degradation. And because of the extraordinary shroud of secrecy that the government has used to cloak its activities there, the world will never know how many detainees are actually dangerous terrorists,

The men were beaten, kicked, stripped naked, shaved, hooded, spat upon; but more striking was the idiocy of the questioning they endured.

and how many are unfortunate bystanders crushed by a vengeful war.

The Tipton Three appear to be among the unfortunates. Iqbal's mother had traveled from England to Pakistan to find her son a bride. She returned to England—on September 10, 2001—confident that she'd done so, and with instructions to her son to go meet the girl. The three friends were aware of the terrorist attacks of September 11, they say, when they went off to Pakistan not long after the attacks. But they had no idea that their later decision to travel from Pakistan into Afghanistan would sweep them up in the aftermath of the attacks against America.

"Being young, being only 18, you don't be aware of the political issues," Ahmed told me in a recent interview. "We were young, stupid. You don't know what the outcome is going to be. It's one of the childish things that we did."

It ended up being worse than childish when the three were rounded up by Northern Alliance fighters as they scrambled to get out of the war zone and back into Pakistan.

This is, we now know, the story of most of the detainees held without

charge and without clear prospect of release in the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay. They are not, for the most part, "the worst of the worst" terrorists that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has described. More than half of the so-called "enemy combatants" who've been given combatant status review tribunals—the main legal forum the Pentagon allows—were found to have committed no hostile act against U.S. or coalition forces, according to a study of tribunal records by lawyers affiliated with Seton Hall University Law School.

Just 7 percent of detainees were captured by U.S. and allied forces, the tribunal records show. The rest were rounded up by Pakistani authorities or various local militias, such as the Northern Al-

liance fighters who picked up Ahmed, Iqbal, and Rasul.

A fog of naiveté envelops the men throughout their bizarre journey. They wrongly climb aboard a series of vans and buses that they think will carry them safely back across the border, only to discover that they have become part of what was being billed in Western news accounts as a mass surrender of Taliban forces. Hapless is the word that best describes the Tipton Three in the months before they arrive at Guantanamo, where they become more hardened by their treatment. And if there was a single word to describe the Americans they encounter, starting at their first detention center in Kandahar, it would be this: Ugly.

THE FILMMAKERS SPARE US THE MOST graphic details of the abuse we have by now heard so much about. Though the men were beaten, kicked, stripped naked, shaved, hooded, spat upon, and shackled, the violence is portrayed only in suggestive snippets.

More striking is the sheer idiocy of the questioning they must endure.

The three were questioned initially in

Afghanistan. The first American military interrogator in Kandahar greets Iqbal with these words: "You're al-Qaeda!"

"No," he mumbles.

"Look at me, you're al-Qaeda!" "No," comes the muffled reply.

"You know this can stop whenever you make the decision it can stop, or it can go all night, OK? We can be here all night or we can be here all day tomorrow. All right, you're al-Qaeda. We got you with the Taliban, you were arrested by the Northern Alliance. All right, now I want to know where bin Laden is. Look at me. Where's bin Laden?!"

If there were ever any intelligence, let alone hard evidence, on which American interrogators based their questioning, the three got no hint of it. On January 13, 2002, clad in the now-familiar orange jumpsuits, black hoods, and goggles, their hands and feet in shackles, they were flown by military transport to Cuba.

Once at Guantanamo, the absurdities mounted. American interrogators first told Iqbal that his passport and other documents were found in an Afghan cave—an allegation Iqbal denies and which the interrogator, during later questioning, admitted was a mistake. On another occasion, Iqbal was interrogated by a woman and a man who translates for her—until Iqbal informed them, once again, that he is British and speaks English.

Then the woman asks: "Are you an observant Muslim? Are you a good Muslim?"

Most bizarre, and frightening for the three suspects, is a series of interrogations in which they were shown a picture and later, a videotape of a rally in Afghanistan, featuring Mohammed Atta, the ruthless ringleader of the 9-11 crews—and Osama bin Laden himself.

This line of questioning, the men say, didn't come up until they'd been detained for more than a year. By then a blonde American woman who said she was "from Washington" was in charge.

"You said you were wearing an Adidas track suit," she tells Rasul. "This is your friend, Asif Iqbar," she says, pointing to a man in the photo. Rasul insists that's not the case. "This is you, in your Adidas track suit ... Recognize him, Mohammed Atta?"

"Who is that?" Rasul replies.

"He headed the 9-11 attacks," the interrogator says. "This is you, right? This is you at a rally in Afghanistan held by Osama bin Laden, right?"

In an interview, Ahmed told me that interrogators covered up the date on the still photograph and refused to let him see it when he asked. "We said, 'Show us the date so we can prove our innocence,'" Ahmed says. "And they would say, 'It doesn't matter, the date. It's irrelevant.'"

In fact, it would be the date, which the three later saw on the videotape of the "rally," that apparently helped lead to their eventual release. The tape showed that the video was recorded in 2000—a year during which Rasul was employed as a clerk in an electronics superstore in England while the other two, also in England, were serving probation and performing community service to satisfy charges against them.

After British intelligence had cleared them of being at the infamous rally, there was still more. The Americans then tried to link them to Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber" who was thwarted in his attempt to blow up a transatlantic flight to Miami in December 2001—after the Tipton Three already were in custody. "I didn't know who Richard Reid was until I got out and heard about him in the news," Rasul told me.

THE THREE WERE FINALLY RELEASED in March 2004, after more than two years of incarceration and under circumstances that were never made clear. The release appears to have been a favor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was under intense pressure over the fate of Britons held at Guantanamo and because of his close political alliance with President George W. Bush. After brief questioning by British authorities, the three returned to their neighborhood.

Now they travel abroad without incident—Iqbal finally was married in Pakistan last July, and the trio has visited much of Europe promoting the film. Airlines and international authorities apparently are unperturbed by them.

At the Pentagon, officials say that the three had their cases reviewed, but that none of that material would be made pub-

lic, since the reviews occurred before later lawsuits forced such disclosure. "Everybody at Guantanamo was there for a valid reason," Lieutenant Commander J.D. Gordon said in an interview.

The Road to Guantanamo inspires neither anger nor tears, just a numb realization that the United States has somehow gone terribly awry. It is at times a convoluted narrative—young, unknown actors play the Tipton Three during their travels and interrogations, while the actual Tipton Three appear on camera periodically to tell their own stories. The film does not seek to answer certain questions—

such as what motive really prompted the three to travel into Afghanistan. We learn no shameful secrets. Its impact, though, is in its understated portrayal of the moral confusion of the so-called war on terrorism, with its crass intermingling of politics and fear. If nothing else, the film teaches us that Guantanamo Bay is a place from which hundreds of men will, one day, emerge wondering what fate placed them in the hands of Americans whose actions are so profoundly un-American. **TAP**

Marie Cocco writes a column syndicated by The Washington Post Writers' Group.

BOOKS

NOT SO FAST

THE GOOD FIGHT: WHY LIBERALS—AND ONLY LIBERALS—CAN WIN THE WAR ON TERROR AND MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

BY PETER BEINART HarperCollins, 304 pages, \$25.95

BY MICHAEL TOMASKY

HAS THE TIME COME FOR LIBERALS to put Iraq behind us? The answer depends to some extent on which Iraq we're talking about. Iraq the Reality still rages, and we can be certain that we will be enmeshed in the region in one way or another for a long time. Iraq the Debate, however, is already in some sense a relic of the past. Three years ago, liberals for and against the war tore into one another, the arguments in some cases rupturing friendships between people who took opposing sides (and in one case I know, between two who were both hawks!). But isn't it time now to look to the future, fashioning a set of principles about foreign policy, national security, and the fight against terrorism on which all liberals can more or less agree?

There is something to be said for this view. It's one I advance in an essay I wrote for a collection, edited by the historians Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson, that will be published soon by the University of California Press. But perhaps I was getting ahead of myself. Reading Peter Beinart reminds me that there are accounts still to be settled.

BEINART REALLY WANTS THE CON- versation to be about the future, and with good reason: As the editor of *The New Republic* (he resigned just recently), Beinart led that journal into a posture of perfervid support of the Iraq War. In dispute of that adjective, he might direct the reader to any number of hedges and qualifications in *TNR*'s pages in the run-up to the war, and to a general claim that the magazine's reasons for wanting war were not the same (in every particular) as the Bush administration's reasons. Perhaps so. But to go back and read through Beinart's "TRB" columns, unsigned *TNR* editorials, and other articles the magazine published in 2002 and 2003 is to be reminded afresh that, while *TNR* disagrees with the right most of the time, its real enemy is the left. So, on Iraq, *TNR* was intellectually pro-war, but emotionally anti-anti-war. The paroxysmal contempt for the war's opponents combined with the docile credulousness toward Bush administration pro-war assertions (especially about Saddam Hussein's alleged nuclear capability) render "perfervid" an entirely fair modifier.

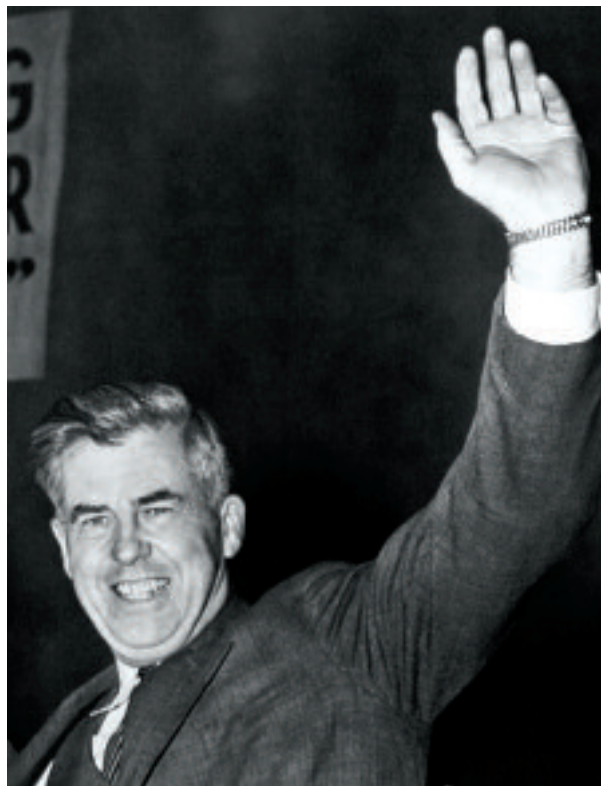
TNR fancies itself contrarian in this

regard—the “liberal” magazine that had the “guts” to be pro-war. A few months back, Martin Peretz, one of the magazine’s owners and its editor-in-chief, sent out a juvenile letter to potential subscribers disparaging the predictable views of *The Nation*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The National Review*, and *The American Prospect*, and urging upon these weary and unchallenged readers his blessedly unpredictable *tnr*. In truth, *tnr* has been thusly “unpredictable” for so long now, every “contrarian” stand it takes is so utterly unsurprising, that the whole business has become a standing joke in some Washington circles. The only unexpected thing would have been for *tnr* to oppose the Iraq War.

It did not; but boy, did it oppose the opposers. And so, after the 2004 presidential election, which the Democrats lost chiefly because of their perceived and (mostly) real weakness on national security, Beinart sat himself down and wrote “A Fighting Faith,” a long essay in which he vilified the pinkos and the softies—the “doughfaces,” as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. called them in *The Vital Center*—who had brought the Democrats to their low station. Most of the piece’s 5,600 or so words were intelligent and unexceptionable ruminations on liberalism and foreign policy, with much of which I happen to agree. But just to drive the point home, Beinart argued that the real problem in the election had been “the party’s liberal base, which would have refused to nominate anyone who” without equivocation saw the Iraq War as central to the war on terror (*tnr* had endorsed Joe Lieberman for president). And he named names, decrying his two chief exemplars of dough-facery—Michael Moore and MoveOn. Drawing a historical parallel with the struggles that engulfed the Democratic Party of 1948—when the party’s “hard” liberals encouraged those who were naive about the Soviet Union (or worse, working for it) to take a hike and sign up with

Henry Wallace—Beinart, whether he meant to or not, all but advocated purging the liberal critics of the war from the Democratic Party.

THUS WAS BORN *THE GOOD FIGHT*, based on that essay and signed after a ferocious bidding war jacked the price up to a reported \$600,000 (another thing about left-bashing “contrarianism”: It pays).



Oh, Henry! Are Iraq War opponents mere Wallaceites?

To cut to the chase—yes, he has toned down the bit about Michael Moore (about whom I have my own reservations) and MoveOn (now re-identified, after MoveOn took issue with some of his earlier claims, as an offshoot called MoveOn Peace). The original essay, in comparing MoveOn to Henry Wallace’s Progressive Party, had implicitly—and very sloppily—alleged that MoveOn contained actual al-Qaeda members among its ranks (that is, since the Progressive Party did have actual Communists, and since MoveOn was today’s analogue to it). In the penultimate chapter of *The Good Fight*, Beinart acknowledges that “there were no Salafists infiltrating MoveOn Peace,” although he

is still critical of the organization, and of Moore. The book adds Howard Dean and his followers to this *cahier des doléances*, but the urge to purge is itself purged. What Beinart wants today is to persuade those to his left within the Democratic Party that they need to place the fight against terrorism at the center of the experience of being a liberal today.

Beinart’s central thesis—as it were, the answer to the question raised in his subtitle—is that today’s liberals can learn from the great era of Cold War liberalism the specific lesson that liberalism made America great precisely because it understood America’s potential to do harm. The narrative of that liberalism, Beinart writes, begins not with America’s need to believe in itself, but with America’s need to make itself worthy of belief. Around the world, America does that by accepting international constraints on its power. For conservatives—from John Foster Dulles to George W. Bush—American exceptionalism means that we do not need such constraints. America’s heart is pure. But in the liberal vision, it is precisely our recognition that we are not angels that makes us exceptional. Because we recognize that we can be corrupted by unlimited power, we accept the restraints that empires refuse.

From that thesis, Beinart shows—in telling the story of the creation of Americans for Democratic Action, of the Marshall Plan, of Kennedy’s vision that winning the Cold War abroad required getting closer to living up to our professed ideals at home—how liberalism up through Vietnam adhered (enough of the time, anyway) to this Niebuhrian doctrine of self-restraint, and how fealty to that principle, combined with a clear-eyed recognition of the nature of the external threat, succeeded both in maintaining liberalism’s political pre-eminence and in keeping the totalitarian enemy at bay.

Beinart then chronicles the collapse of this “anti-totalitarian liberalism” in the 1960s. He is no apologist for the men who

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brought us Vietnam. But the upshot of the decade, for Beinart's purposes, was that the liberalism that followed the Vietnam schism, while retaining "many of the same domestic principles" as the older liberalism, "no longer connected them to the struggle for freedom around the world." Liberalism became isolationist, skeptical of American power, anti-imperialist; and this mindset, never really replaced by anything else in 40 years' time, is at the core of what is preventing the Democratic Party from fashioning a credible response to the Republicans' proposals regarding terrorism today.

I say never really replaced, but for Beinart—as for other liberal backers of the Iraq War such as Paul Berman and George Packer—the lineaments of something new were sketched out in the Balkans in the 1990s, as successful interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo signaled the possibility of a new foreign-policy liberalism, less like the Vietnam-era variant and more like its 1948 cousin. But how similar were Kosovo and Iraq? Air sorties in familiar Europe undertaken with the support of NATO allies are one thing, while a full-fledged ground war in an alien and hostile land undertaken with only token backing from a hodgepodge of favor-carrying nations is quite another. And here we return to those unsettled accounts.

IT TAKES BEINART JUST FOUR PAGES TO make his confession about Iraq: "I was wrong." He deploys the three little words, which have miraculously eluded the grasp of just about every other liberal war supporter save Fred Kaplan of *Slate* (who came clean ages ago), without hesitation. For this, Beinart deserves some credit.

On the strength of this short passage, Beinart will be limned by some as having "recanted" his Iraq position, and to a certain extent he obviously has. But the point of this book is not simply to broach a reconsideration of Iraq. Beinart's purpose here is to describe a future, rooted in a particular argument about the past, into which he wants the rest of us to follow him. So the question that liberals and Democrats must sort out before moving forward is whether the Iraq War can in any conceivable way be placed in the tradition

of Cold War liberalism that Beinart and I admire. Beinart doesn't address this directly. He gestures toward addressing it, noting the "grim irony that this book's central argument is one I myself ignored when it was needed most" and acknowledging that he has not always been liberalism's "most faithful custodian." But why only gesture? The answer to the above question about whether the Iraq War belongs to the tradition of Cold War liberalism is a reverberating, ear-splitting "no." The '48ers, according to Beinart's own argument, were masters of restraint. They would never have endorsed a unilateral and "preventive" war like the current one. They fought conservatives advocating "rollback" then (precursors to today's neo-conservatives); and, as of early 2003, two of them, Schlesinger and George F. Kennan, were still around to tell us that they opposed an invasion of Iraq.

If we are to move forward along lines Beinart suggests, we need to know

whether Beinart and other liberal hawks will recognize the difference between antitotalitarian liberalism and conservatism, neo- or otherwise, when they see it. Unfortunately, Beinart slips and slides around this question. His chapter on Iraq, which rehearses the administration's various arguments for war, reads at first blush like a wise and disinterested account of a tragic march to folly. But he writes about this period as if he'd spent it on a mountaintop in Tibet instead of editing an influential magazine and cheering on the administration virtually every step of the way—and accusing war critics, not all of whom (news flash: not even a *majority* of whom) are anti-imperialist Chomskyites, of "intellectual incoherence" and "abject pacifism," as he so unforgettably put matters to *The Washington Post* in February 2003. I resented those comments at the time personally, I still do, and I know a lot of people who feel similarly.

I share many of Beinart's goals for the



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—Alex Lichtenstein,
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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Democratic Party. I'm not entirely sure how he proposes that today's Democrats make this Niebuhrian case about recognizing America's potential to do harm; it doesn't seem like a vote-getter, but, intellectually at least, he's on to something. And I found his prescriptive chapter a bit thin. His proposals for how liberals should fight the war on terrorism—a Marshall Plan for the Arab world, greater cooperation with the United Nations (where possible), and NATO—are rather general (and, for all his huffing and puffing about doughfacy, every one could be endorsed by the very people he reproves in the previous chapter). Even with these limitations, though, his argument that there is much wisdom to be

found today in liberal foreign policy of the 1947-1963 period, and that fighting terrorism must occupy a central place in the liberal schema, is sound.

But to give this subject book-length treatment without acknowledging plainly that the war in Iraq stands against the Cold War liberal tradition rather than within it damages, almost fatally, the credibility of the argument. So we're supposed to sign up with the author's vision of a revived '48-ism, even though we know from his own written record that it could lead to another Iraq? I'd love to talk with Beinart about the future and only the future. But not just yet. **TAP**

Research assistance by Nelson Harvey.

Glass-Steagall Act, which had prohibited commercial banks from underwriting or marketing securities. Congress even weakened self-regulation, making it much more difficult for individual shareholders to win lawsuits against corporations or underwriters that deliberately falsified data. Fittingly, a leading architect of that fraud-inviting law, former California Congressman Chris Cox, is now chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In the 1990s, the relatively public-minded Arthur Levitt headed the SEC. But whenever Chairman Levitt tried to enact tough new regulations to deal with new abuses, a bipartisan consensus in Congress reined him in. This was less about market theory than about the sheer political power of insiders.

Investors, gulled by engineered euphoria, overpriced financial assets by several trillion dollars. When reality finally intruded, a crash was inevitable. A relatively small number of the most spectacular cases, such as Enron, grabbed most of the headlines. But if you read the financial press carefully, it was clear just how pervasive the abuses were, and still are. For instance, a list of the banks and investment banks implicated in the Wall Street scandals includes all 10 of the 10 largest—Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Citigroup, Merrill Lynch, J.P. Morgan, and so on. Together, these worthies paid an unprecedented \$1.388 billion in fines and disgorgements to settle the litigation brought by New York Attorney General Elliot Spitzer.

My immediate source for that list is John C. Bogle's indispensable *The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism*. Since 2000, a shelf's worth of valuable studies have appeared on the collapse and its causes. But if you have the time or inclination to read only one, read Bogle.

Not only is his book a lucid summary of all that went wrong. More important, Bogle is uniquely credible as the rare insider who knows just how the game is rigged—and is disgusted enough to tell what he knows. In 1974, Bogle founded one of the most innovative and successful mutual fund companies, Vanguard. Since then, he has been almost alone as an insider calling for radical reforms.

BOOKS

TRUTH IN CAPITALISM

THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF CAPITALISM BY JOHN C. BOGLE

Yale University Press, 260 pages, \$25.00

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

THE STOCK MARKET COLLAPSE OF 2000-2001 was the most serious since the crash of 1929. But unlike the earlier Great Crash, the recent one led neither to a general depression nor to a wider indictment of laissez-faire capitalism. Given the continuing commitment of both political parties to largely deregulated financial markets, Congress responded with the most modest of reforms, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act—and that only thanks to the grotesque self-immolation of Enron.

Today, many of the abuses that led to the stock meltdown are reappearing. Insiders continue to reap fortunes at the expense of small investors. Conflicts of interest pervade financial markets.

One way to view the crash of 2000-2001 is as a failure of what social scientists call the principal-agent relationship. In this case, the principals are shareholders, and the agents include accountants, lawyers, stockbrokers, underwriters, and other fiduciaries, not least of all boards of directors. The responsibility of these agents is codified in the scheme of finan-

cial regulation and disclosure created during the New Deal. In a well-functioning market, investors discipline companies by buying and selling their shares at a price that reflects accurate information. Their agents are supposed to supply that information.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, every element of agency failed. Nominally independent auditors colluded with executives to dress up corporate books. Ostensibly fair-minded securities analysts turned out to be stock touts. Boards of directors that allegedly represented shareholders helped CEOs reap astronomical compensation packages based on manipulation of share prices. Mutual funds, rather than serving as the agents of investors, helped themselves to huge transaction fees and invariably voted their shares with management.

Behind the failure of agency was a broader failure of politics. Neither party in Congress had an appetite for policing abuses. On the contrary, Congress loosened the remaining regulatory strictures against conflicts of interest, such as the

Bogle is particularly good at exploring the default of the mutual funds and other large institutional investors that supposedly serve the interests of small shareholders. The ongoing scams of the mutual-fund industry—what one Republican senator called “the world’s largest skimming operation”—have gone almost unnoticed amid the more extreme frauds. And, as usual, the scandal is what’s legal.

Astonishingly, Bogle calculates that, in the absence of reforms, “more than three quarters of the *cumulative* financial wealth produced by stocks over an investment lifetime will be consumed by fund managers,” through fees, commissions, market-timing schemes designed to favor the house over the investor, and other hidden forms of insider compensation. From 1997 to 2002 alone, he writes, “the total revenues paid by investors to investment banking and brokerage firms exceeded \$1 *trillion*, and payments to mutual funds exceeded \$275 *billion*.” The quartile of mutual funds with the highest expenses (3 percent per year), he reports, paid investors a net annual return of 9 percent during the decade that ended in 2005. The lowest cost quartile paid 11.7 percent. The stock market as a whole beat the average managed fund.

As political players, the big funds are guardians of rules that favor insider enrichment, not defenders of the small investor. No mutual fund, pension fund manager, bank, or insurance company, Bogle points out, “has ever sponsored a proxy resolution that was opposed by the board of directors or management.” Nor has a single institutional investor testified on the abuse of stock options given to executives. Talk about a failure of agency.

Currently, 66 percent of all shares of stock are held by institutions and just 100 financial institutions hold more than half, so if shareholder democracy is ever going to arrive, institutions must begin serving as agents of the investors who ultimately own the assets. But don’t expect that to happen any time soon. Even after the scandals and the market collapse that took trillions from their individual clients, nearly all mutual funds behave just like other financial-industry insiders. The only major exceptions are union pension funds

and some large, activist public-employee funds like the California Public Employees’ Retirement System.

Bogle deplores stock-option compensation as a fundamentally flawed method for aligning executive and shareholder interests and blames the big funds for tolerating it. Bonuses in the form of restricted stock, he writes, would be a good alternative. “But such sensible programs were almost never used,” he notes, “because those alternative schemes would have required corporations to count the cost as an *expense*.” He adds that institutional investors should “move away from their present obsession with short-term earnings of dubious validity, and toward a new obsession focused on the creation of intrinsic value over the long term.”

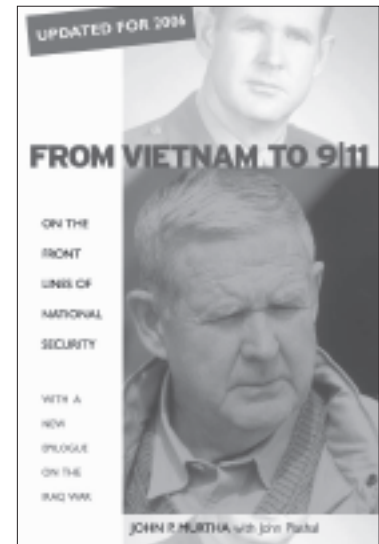
Bogle is appalled that the mega-rich are pulling away from everyone else. Between 1980 and 2004, he calculates, average CEO pay increased 614 percent adjusted for inflation; average worker pay rose just 7 percent. “Yet,” he writes, “the nation’s stockholders still did not awaken.”

But, come to think of it, why should shareholders care about the income distribution? “Owners of the World, Unite,” is Bogle’s stated credo. But, if there is one flaw in Bogle’s otherwise superbly illuminating book, it is the exaggerated faith placed in shareholder democracy as a general remedy.

Just as there was much more to the excesses of the 1920s than a failure of accountability to small investors, the corruption of the 1980s and 1990s went far deeper than the disempowerment of the shareholder. Indeed, many of the worst abuses were perpetrated in the name of “maximizing shareholder value.” The deeper problem was a political failure to hold financial markets and corporations accountable to society as a whole, not just to investors.

The remedies of the New Deal era likewise went far beyond the SEC schema of greater transparency. And a reform of contemporary capitalism would entail much more than a revolt of investors. In the 1930s, Congress gave us not just disclosure, but a far broader strategy to limit the political power of concentrated wealth, to rein in financial conflicts of in-

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terest, to appropriate social outlay to complement and constrain private capital, and to assist the fledgling labor movement. The need was to create multiple political and economic counterweights against the abuses of laissez faire and concentrated financial power, not just to liberate shareholders. It is hardly accidental that the only public-minded pension funds are those representing those same countervailing institutions—namely unions and public employees.

In our own era, there has been a broad political failure to connect these several dots. The deregulation of financial markets, which in turn invited the Wall Street scandals, is of a piece with the weakening of the public sector and the labor movement. At bottom, this is a political failure reflecting corporate inroads deep into the Democratic Party. As a consequence, few liberal leaders cogently tell this broader story; reform is partial and feeble; and there are too few countervailing institutions to offset the concentrated political power of the financial industry.

“The market needs a place,” wrote the moderately liberal economist Arthur Okun, “and the market needs to be kept in its place.” This is not the same as calling for shareholder democracy, which is, in the end, a call for more perfect markets. Keeping markets in general and financial markets in particular in their places requires a political movement, one whose center-left party does not take its economic policies from Democratic investment bankers whose self-interests scarcely differ from Republican ones.

Even as Bogle places his hopes on expanded shareholder power, he well appreciates the necessary role of public regulation. His manifesto includes several regulatory reforms to limit stock-option compensation, give more power to non-management directors, impose tighter regulation on mutual-fund governance, and prohibit a broad range of conflicts of interest. He favors far stronger federal or state regulation of corporations and is even sympathetic to the principles of the Glass-Steagall Act.

Just as the Global Sullivan Principles of the 1980s used consumer and investor leverage, prodding U.S. corporations to

push South Africa to end apartheid, we need a set of Bogle Principles. Big fiduciary institutions that signed the principles would become instruments of reform, not agents of insider enrichment. Smart investors would patronize only mutual funds that subscribed to these principles and that used their own behavior and lobbying muscle to carry them out.

Bogle, needless to say, is about as wel-

come in today's mutual-fund industry as Spitzer. And one has to wonder, why is he so alone? American capitalism was rescued in the 1930s not just by ordinary citizens on the march but also by a generation of splendid class traitors, people of means who recognized the larger stakes. Today, reformist patricians are almost totally AWOL. Bogle reminds us what they could do. **TAP**

BOOKS

HOW THE WAR WAS LOST

COBRA II: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

BY MICHAEL GORDON AND BERNARD TRAINOR Pantheon Books, 603 pages, \$27.95

BY STEPHEN HOLMES

THIS VIVID BOOK WRAPS A POLITICAL bombshell inside a riveting tale. Its central chapters deliver a blow-by-blow account of the unstoppable American dash toward Baghdad, blinding sandstorms and all, in March and April 2003. The co-authors—Michael Gordon is the senior war correspondent for *The New York Times*; Bernard Trainor, a former Marine Corps lieutenant general—tell stories of skilled leadership, combat heroics, and the campaign's ultimate success at driving Saddam Hussein from power, without neglecting the inevitable battlefield snafus, poor coordination among combatant units, wildly misleading intelligence, and scenes of gruesome carnage.

For the American invaders, the greatest surprise turned out to have been the unconventional tactics of the enemy. On the drive to Baghdad, U.S. forces did not initially confront, as they had been led to expect, either the demoralized regular army or Saddam's Republican Guard but rather the highly motivated Fedayeen Saddam: “The enemy faced by U.S. forces” was “largely amorphous, not in uniform, and rarely part of an organized military force.” It leveled the battlefield, to some extent, “by ignoring the rules of conventional warfare.” It fought “using guile, deception and ambush.” At one point, the Pentagon's original war plans looked to be in shambles thanks to “the work of an enemy who was not supposed

to exist.” The decision to seize Baghdad at lightning speed and therefore to dart past pockets of unexpected guerrilla-style resistance in the south, rather than lingering to mop them up, remains one of the most controversial choices of the war.

Cobra II, however, would not be such an important book if it were merely a fascinating and unflinching work of military history. It is much more than that. Gordon and Trainor may have tossed the stone that loosed an avalanche in the ongoing generals' mutiny against the leadership of Donald Rumsfeld. Gordon and Trainor freely acknowledge that extensive interviews with military officers from all services shaped their perspective on the war. By publicly documenting the depth and breadth of military disenchantment with Rumsfeld, their book may have emboldened the half-dozen dissenting generals to speak bluntly about what they consider the wretchedly incompetent performance of the defense secretary. This public dissent suggests intense conviction on their part, or at least white-hot anger, considering that it may jeopardize lucrative future employment in the defense industry.

Rumsfeld's military critics regularly lambaste him not only for the many catastrophic decisions he has made, but also for his overbearing decision-making style and even for a pathologically autistic personality. In one of the most hilarious pas-

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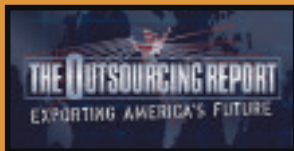
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sages of the book, Trainor and Gordon reproduce Rumsfeld's answer, in December 2005, to the question of what he had learned from the war in Iraq: "I think if I had to pull out one lesson that we've learned over the past four or five years, it would be that in the 21st century we're going to have to stop thinking about things, numbers of things, and mass, and think also and maybe even first about speed and agility and precision." In other words, what Rumsfeld "learned" from the war in Iraq is nothing other than the military doctrine that he had been preaching for many years.

Rumsfeld's commitment to a streamlined invasion force scandalously contradicted the *casus belli* that the administration alleged for the war. Bush rallied political support for the invasion by presenting it as an act of pre-emptive self-defense on the grounds that Saddam Hussein possessed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and had cooperative relations with transnational terrorist groups. If Rumsfeld had taken such allegations seriously, however, he would have had to double the size of the invading force: "Securing the WMD required sealing the country's borders and quickly seizing control of the many suspected sites before they were raided by profiteers, terrorists and regime officials determined to carry on the fight." The force that Rumsfeld eventually assembled, by contrast, "was too small to do any of this." In other words, Rumsfeld's fixation on slimming down the invasion force trumped Bush's wish to prevent WMDs from falling into the hands of terrorists. A doctrinaire commitment to a peculiar method of war fighting contradicted and subverted the primary declared purpose of the war.

This inconsistency between methods and aims remains just as striking if we turn to the long-term war objective of creating a stable, pro-American regime in Iraq so as to transform the politics of the region and make the Middle East more hospitable to American national-security interests. Whenever the aim of war is to stabilize a country politically, mass becomes more important than speed. Rumsfeld's failure to grasp this imperative or

indeed to take any noticeable interest in the prerequisites of political stability explains, according to the authors, how he managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. The "messy aftermath of a seemingly decisive war" was due mostly to "military and political blunders in Washington." The insurgency flared from a small spark into a raging conflagration—so the authors contend—because Rumsfeld did not commit enough soldiers to the Iraqi theater to damp it down.

Long before the invasion, Rumsfeld was granted full control of the postwar



Supply Your Own Punch Line: Rummy

situation in Iraq. But it interested him so little that he did almost nothing to prepare for it. "After the Pentagon established its primacy in postwar Iraq, the Phase IV [i.e., postwar] planning effort slowed to a crawl." Rumsfeld is renowned as a chronically impatient micromanager. In this particular case, however, he "did not seem anxious about the lack of momentum." Why not? Absurd as it may sound, "Rumsfeld and his aides viewed the building of a new Iraq as a relatively undemanding pursuit." Alternatively, the defense secretary vaguely imagined that yet-unidentified subservient allies would miraculously appear in the wake of a spectacular American victory to perform the unglamorous chores of peacekeeping and nation building. These expectations

seem to explain why, shockingly, "No military headquarters or staff was selected in advance to secure postwar Iraq."

Neglect of postwar stability was a conscious choice, Trainor and Gordon insist, made in defiance of plentiful advice to the contrary. Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, who was publicly derided by Paul Wolfowitz after telling a congressional committee that hundreds of thousands of American troops would be needed in Iraq, is only the best-known example. Others inside and outside the Pentagon were arguing for a constabulary force at the ready to control the criminal anarchy likely to break out when the ghastly dictatorship collapsed. But Rumsfeld and his cadre of yes-men did not listen.

Speaking of yes-men, Rumsfeld's haughty impatience with dissent and disagreement apparently explains his choice of the self-effacing Richard Myers as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "After hearing Rumsfeld testify on troop levels around the world," Trainor and Gordon recount, "Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican, said cuttingly there was no need to hear from Myers as well since he knew the chairman was incapable of expressing an independent view." The Gulf War in contrast, according to the authors, saw a robust and productive back-and-forth between Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and a strong chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell. Rumsfeld preferred a deferential military leader, ensuring that his own ideas, however half-baked, invariably prevailed.

Like Myers, General Tommy Franks has recently sallied forth from retirement to defend the defense secretary against his critics. But the portrait of Franks sketched in *Cobra II* is no more flattering than the portrayal of Myers. For one thing, "Tommy Franks never acknowledged the enemy he faced nor did he comprehend the nature of the war he was directing." He is also described as vainglorious, taking credit for a war plan developed by subordinates and "airbrushing" history when regaling journalists such as Bob Woodward with stories of the war. Even though he at first proposed dispatching more than 300,000 troops to

Iraq, he allowed himself to be browbeaten by Rumsfeld into sending the streamlined force that proved unable to control the postwar anarchy.

Rumsfeld also seems to have had similar reasons for appointing L. Paul Bremer III as administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. Having no familiarity with the Middle East and no experience at all with nation building, Bremer could not talk back to his boss with the confidence reserved for the knowledgeable. The original plan was to team Bremer with Zalmay Khalilzad, now ambassador to Iraq, who at the time was the only high-level member of the administration personally acquainted with all of the important players in the Iraqi diaspora. But at this point Bremer (to the astonishment of Powell and others) pulled a Rumsfeld: "Determined to solidify his authority, Bremer squeezed out Khalilzad, the one official who knew the Iraqi politicians well."

The defining moment of Bremer's Iraqi tour occurred on May 23, 2003, when he issued the order to disband the Iraqi army, oblivious to the role of the military as an employment agency providing subsistence to hundreds of thousands of armed Iraqis and their families. The folly of this decision can be debated. What is crucial to note is that, while Rumsfeld was calling the shots, the Joint Chiefs, Secretary of State Powell, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice all learned about this weighty decision after it was made. Decision making by a small handful of men, behind closed doors and without consultation even inside the executive branch, may suit the authoritarian personality of the defense secretary. But can anyone argue that it promotes an intelligent approach to national security?

During the invasion, Gordon was "embedded" with the Coalition Forces Land Component Command. It is not surprising, therefore, that Iraqi voices and perspectives are largely absent from *Cobra II's* account of the fighting. The one marvelous exception is the authors' retelling of the invasion from the vantage point of Saddam Hussein and his inner circle. Their account is based on postwar debriefings

of high-ranking Iraqi officers, who were induced to talk not by harsh and humiliating treatment, it should be mentioned, but, on the contrary, by lavish banquets and buttering up.

The key revelation here is that Saddam was long convinced that the United States would never launch an all-out assault. He knew that he had no stockpiles of WMD and no working ties with Islamic terrorists targeting America. He was therefore perfectly confident that Bush had no *casus belli*. As a result, "He saw no reason why the Americans would want to invade Iraq."

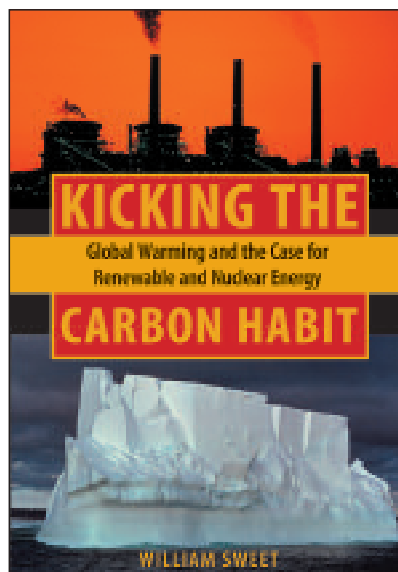
So fearful was Saddam of his own countrymen, by contrast, that he hesitated to arm Iraqi tribes to defend the country: "There was always a chance that he himself could end up as the target of the people's war." By discouraging fraternization among his officers he made a coup less likely, but he also weakened the military's capacity for coordinated defense. One Republican Guard commander explained exactly how autocracy breeds obtuseness, remarking that, in

Saddam's Iraq, "the clever men learned not to involve themselves in any decision-making." Saddam appointed one of his close cousins as commander of the Special Republican Guard forces responsible for the defense of Baghdad, even though the man was a militarily inexperienced drunkard, precisely because "he was not clever enough to put a coup together." His subordinates dared not contradict Saddam for fear of death and worse. The regime operated with virtually no sanity checks. Saddam sometimes made even important decisions on the basis of his dreams.

But the self-weakening nature of Saddam's autocracy was displayed most visibly in his elevation of loyalty over capacity: "Republican Guard and other senior officers were often chosen on the basis of family ties and loyalty, not competence." Gordon and Trainor dwell on this theme, presumably to evoke an ironic comparison with the Bush administration. Of course, Rumsfeld merely fired the people who dared contradict him, while Saddam murdered them along with

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their families. So the comparison is loose, at best. To underscore both the sharp differences and remote similarities, the authors report an encounter that took place soon after Bush assumed the presidency between an Army colonel and Steve Cambone, Rumsfeld's chief aid. "Cambone joked that Rumsfeld thought the Army's problems could be solved by lining up fifty of its generals in the Pentagon and gunning them down." That joke was presumably funnier in Washington than it would have been in Baghdad.

Some commentators have alleged that Saddam planned an insurrection against the American conquerors, to be unleashed after he was toppled from power. Zero evidence supports such speculations, Trainor and Gordon tell us. "Saddam was no more farsighted than the Americans in preparing for the aftermath," they mischievously comment. The real story is more complicated and more interesting. First, Saddam did not anticipate being ousted by force. But he did believe that the Americans might successfully ground the Iraqi air force, including its helicop-

ter gunships, and then proceed to foment a Shiite rebellion in the south. To prepare in advance for such a dangerous development, Saddam distributed caches of small arms, guarded by Baathists, along with Fedayeen units, throughout southern Iraq. Although unit commanders were forbidden to communicate with each other lest they conspire against Saddam, the Fedayeen would presumably have been able to fight off local insurrections long enough to allow the Republican Guard to arrive by land. Once the American invaders had plowed through the south and on to Baghdad, driving Hussein from power, the potential dual use of both the pre-stashed arms and the Fedayeen's cell-like command structure came into view: "[T]he very force designed to counter an insurgency" ultimately became "the core of the insurgency against the Americans."

Having absorbed the biases as well as the insights of their principal informants, Trainor and Gordon tend to exonerate the uniformed military from serious responsibility for the Iraqi debacle. "The violent chaos that followed Saddam's de-

feat," they argue, "was not a matter of not having a plan but of adhering too rigidly to the wrong one." If a better plan had been contrived, presumably incorporating higher troop levels and well-trained constabulary forces, violent chaos would not have erupted or, if it had erupted, it would have been contained.

That the uniformed military should not be granted blanket exoneration, however, is strongly suggested by the parade of officers who have now rallied in support of their besieged defense secretary. *Cobra II* itself acknowledges that Franks knew no more than the civilian Rumsfeld about "the actual structure of political power in Iraq." Both are described as refusing to listen to experts and professionals who knew what needed to be known. But who exactly within the U.S. government knew better?

The CIA and U.S. Special Forces had many contacts in Afghanistan, dating back at least to the 1980s. Iraq, by contrast, had been a denied area, meaning the war was inevitably planned by amateurs with measly knowledge of the coun-

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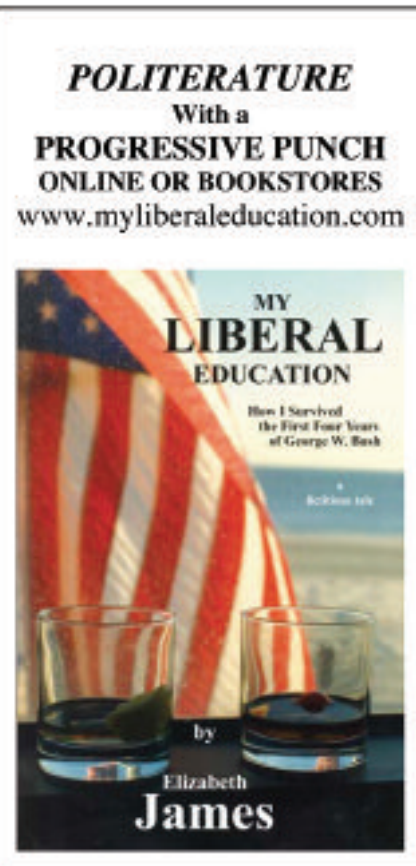
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try the United States was about to invade. Civilians in the administration were no more knowledgeable or thoughtful. After the American military had thoroughly destroyed the Tikriti clan that had ruled Iraq for decades, Rice explained, “the institutions” of the country (the ministries, the courts, the provincial governments, and the police) would go on working normally. Here are her own words: “The concept was that we would defeat the army, but the institutions would hold, everything from ministries to police forces.” And she added, “You would be able to bring new leadership, but we were going to keep the body in place.” Such statements betray an appalling ignorance of the dependence of formal institutions on informal social networks.

Gordon and Trainor sometimes seem to suggest that the Iraq War could have ended successfully if only Rumsfeld had not been in charge. But does this make sense? Admittedly, a powerful argument can be made that a large peacekeeping force is more effective than a small one. Not only do small peacekeeping forces “encourage adversaries to think they could challenge the peacekeepers” but, even more important, they lead the peacekeepers “to rely more on firepower to make up for their limited numbers.” But while this is plausible, it is not a decisive argument. An equally persuasive case can be made that a “bigger footprint” will prove politically destabilizing. Larger numbers of rowdy and culturally ignorant American soldiers blasting heavy-metal music outside mosques on Friday afternoons will not necessarily calm down the population of an occupied country. In other words, a bigger footprint may be either stabilizing or destabilizing. It can cut either way. Because we cannot be certain ahead of time which of the two contrary effects will predominate, we cannot be sure that higher force levels would have prevented a disastrous outcome of the Iraq War.

A related unknown, touching directly on American war aims in Iraq, concerns the armed wing of the Iraqi state bureaucracy. The question is this: Was it ever realistic to expect Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites to be melded together within fully in-

tegrated Iraqi police, military, and state security units—that is, within the core institutions of the state? If not, and there are good reasons to doubt it, the very project of turning power over to “the Iraqis” was unfeasible from the start. In any society deeply divided along tribal, sectarian, and ethnic lines, it is difficult to create a government that is both representative and coherent. (Saddam’s government was to some extent coherent because it was in no degree representative.) When a society’s basic subgroups not only fear and distrust each other but also are weakly organized and fragmented internally, they are unlikely to be able to negotiate stable bargains and share power.

The authors are on firm, not to mention well-trodden, ground when they claim that the occupation of Iraq has been disastrously mismanaged. But they sometimes intimate that it was realistic for Bush to try to reform the Middle East to America’s advantage though a military attack. The problem here lies deeper than strategy or tactics. The administration knew so little about the country it decided to invade that its expectations were basically indistinguishable from wild guesses. Its entire approach to the challenge also reflected an unwarranted confidence in the politically transformative power of superior force. That something even more dishonorable may have been going on is implied by a six-page article, “How and Where to Apply Shock and Awe,” penned by Air Force General Charles Horner and forwarded to Franks by Rumsfeld in December 2001. Trainor and Gordon quote Horner’s extraordinary concluding sentences: “In the end, if we are going to lead, then we must be considered the madmen of the world, capable of any action, willing to risk anything to achieve our national interests. ... If we are to achieve noble purposes we must be prepared to act in the most ignoble manner.” This is how tyrants and terrorists think. That such ideas may have influenced the administration’s decision to invade Iraq suggests that it has much more to answer for than its incompetence. **TAP**

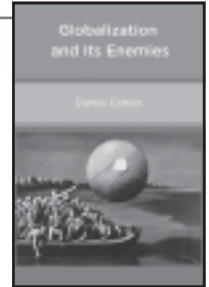
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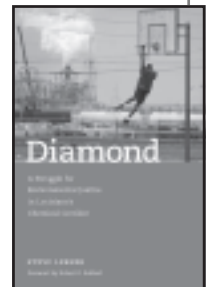
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Quick: Name the three people to Bush's right.

Truly Locked in the Cabinet

BY ROBERT B. REICH

SHORTLY AFTER THE SENATE CONFIRMED JOHN Snow's nomination as Treasury secretary at the end of January 2003, Snow phoned me. He wanted to thank me for the guidance I had indirectly given him for how to survive a nomination hearing in my erstwhile memoir,

Locked in the Cabinet. "Don't defend yourself. Don't lecture. Don't take the bait," I had written. If a senator asks for your view on a controversial issue, refrain from expounding. Instead say, "I look forward to working with you on that, senator."

Since then, Snow has continued to refrain from expressing his views on controversial issues. He may have looked forward to working with senators on significant pieces of legislation, but there's no evidence to date he has done so. I can't remember a Treasury secretary who's been less visible. His name rarely comes up when the White House announces major economic policies. He seems not to be in the loop. It's now rumored that he is on his way out. By the time you read this he may already be gone.

Snow is not alone in his anonymity. Quick: Name a single cabinet officer other than Condoleezza Rice or Donald Rumsfeld. Of all the cabinets I have known, the Bush administration's is by

far the quietest. What do they do all day? My successor at the Labor Department, Elaine Chao, is a nice person with a sunny disposition. I met her at the start of her tenure. Since then I've lost sight of her and heard almost nothing about the Labor Department. Spencer Abraham is Energy secretary. The administration talks a great deal about energy policy, but I don't believe I've seen anything of Abraham. Michael Leavitt is Health and Human Services secretary. The White House touts the Medicare drug benefit as a signal achievement, but how often have we seen or heard from Leavitt on this? Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has gone underground.

IT IS TRUE THAT IN RECENT DECADES presidential cabinets have been subordinated to turbocharged White House staffs. As Labor secretary, I was told with some regularity that "the White House" wanted me to do this or that—give a

speech in Cleveland, meet with a foreign dignitary, soothe ruffled feathers at a California military base about to close, and so on. Eventually I learned that "the White House" was a 30-something hot shot with a desk in the Old Executive Office Building.

Yet the Clinton cabinet was not known for its weak personalities. Bob Rubin, as Treasury secretary, would not have allowed himself to be nearly as far out of the loop as is John Snow. Donna Shalala wouldn't have accepted the stand-in role now played by Michael Leavitt. Attorney General Janet Reno was no shy violet. I was called many things, but never quiet.

Why is this crowd so invisible? Because they've been cowed by a White House that has imposed extraordinary discipline. All policy pronouncements must flow through Karl Rove and Dick Cheney. Everyone else is out of the loop because there is no other loop. The result is the kind of loopiness we've seen again and again, such as the Medicare drug benefit's "doughnut hole" that hits seniors after they receive the first \$2,250 in drug benefits, or Bush's silly band-aid of a one-year extension of relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax. Both the Health and Human Services and the Treasury departments have extraordinary talent. Their top-level civil servants understand the nuances of Medicare and the tax code, respectively, far better than the skills at The Heritage Foundation. But as long as the cabinet departments are kept out of the loop, their expertise is useless.

Bush could have pushed his cabinet secretaries to distinguish themselves. He could have unleashed the knowledge and creativity of his cabinet departments, even in the service of his conservative agenda. He could have used John Snow to be a forceful and effective spokesman for the administration on economic policy. That Bush, Rove, and Cheney chose instead to impose lock-step discipline and gag orders has not only diminished the role of the cabinet but also, in the end, diminished the role of the President. **TAP**